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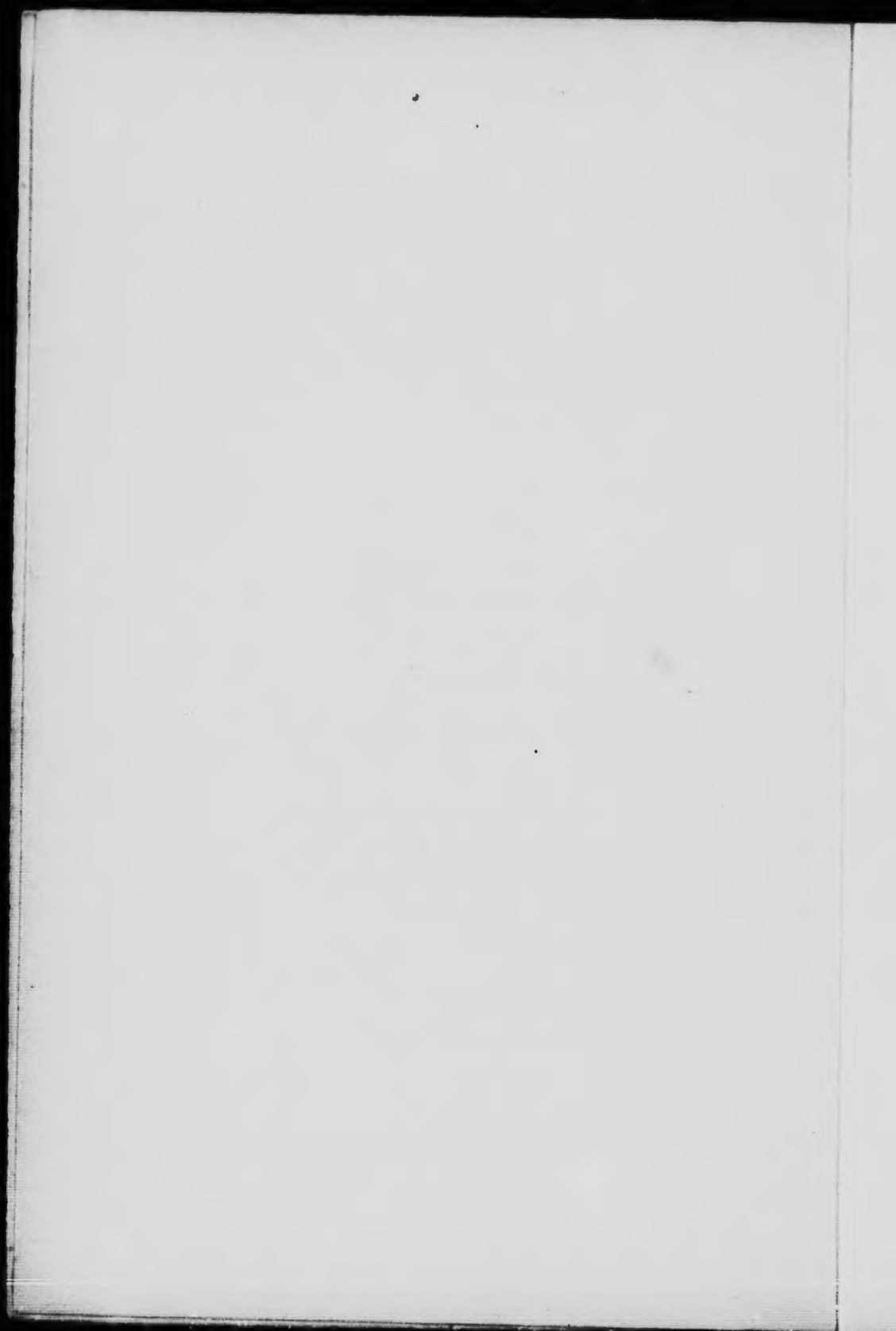


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THE STRAIN OF WHITE



“ ‘ The White Wolf gave a knife — big and sharp it was on two sides.’ ”
FRONTISPIECE.

THE STRATH OF WHITE

BY
JAMES H. ANDERSON
Author of "The Old Man" etc.

Illustrated by
J. H. Anderson

THE M. H. CO. COMPANY



Section of fossilized wood showing cellular structure.

THE STRAIN OF WHITE

By

ADA WOODRUFF ANDERSON

Author of "The Heart of the Red Firs," etc.

Illustrated by Frances Rogers

TORONTO
THE MUSSON BOOK COMPANY
LIMITED

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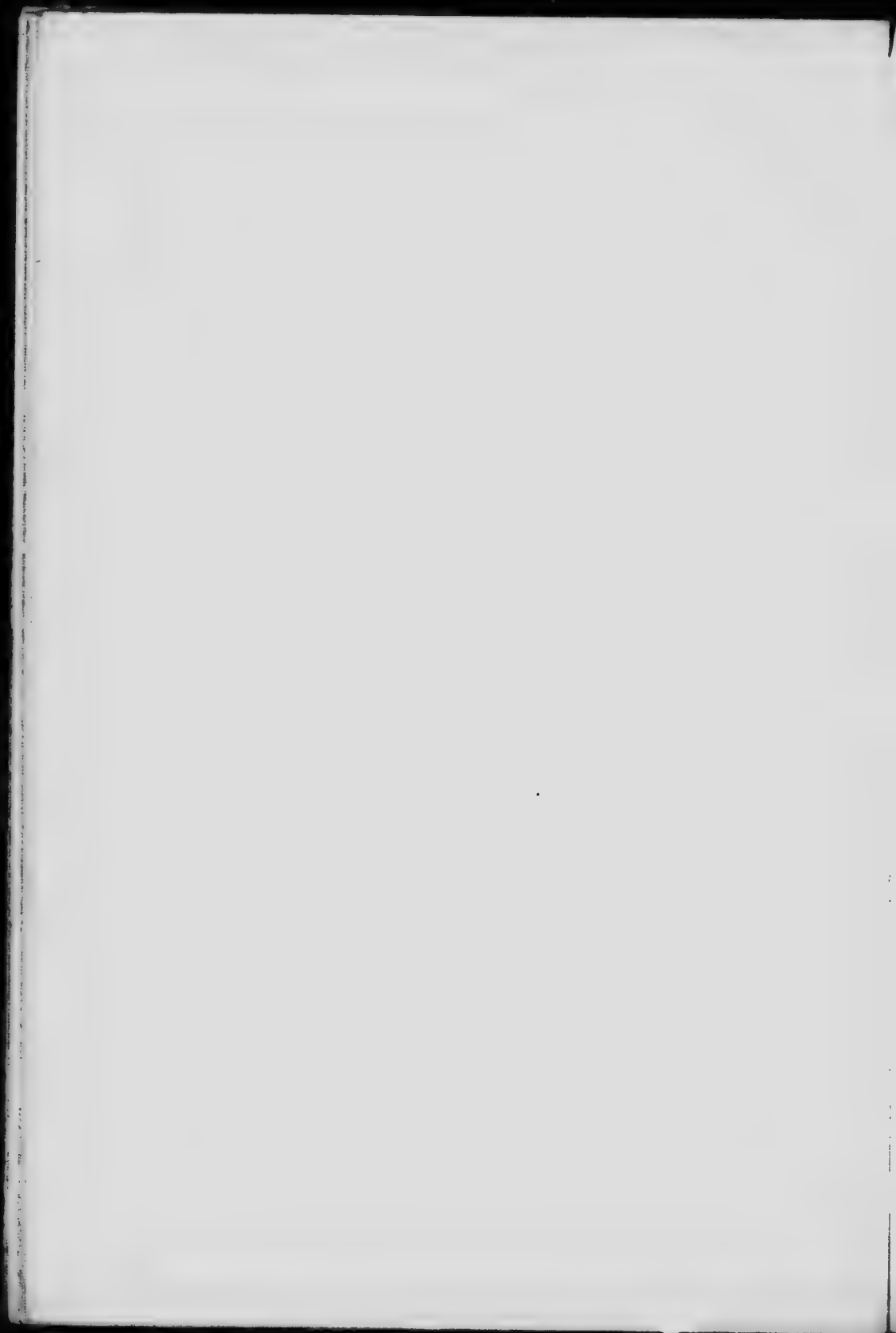
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TO
OLIVER PHELPS ANDERSON



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

THOUGH I do not claim for this book the rank of an historical novel, and the facts touched upon are not always strictly in sequence, it hinges on conditions in the Pacific Northwest in the fifties, after the Territory of Washington was parcelled from old Oregon, and at the close of the Joint Occupancy Treaty, before the withdrawal of the Hudson Bay Company from Fort Nisqually. The true Klickitats were a distinct tribe of the upper Columbia, but the early settlers of the Puget Sound Basin applied the name in general to the Indians east of the Cascade Mountains. We seldom see such Indians now. The spirit of the Yakimas is broken. They have dwindled to a remnant. Kam-i-ah-kan's herds are gone. The plains that were once a vast feeding ground are fenced, reclaimed. The mother of Francesca was not the Singing Bird of history, who led the Lewis and Clarke expedition through the Rockies, but is drawn from a picturesque figure familiar to pioneers as late as the close of the seventies, — a young Yakima woman, straight as a fir tree, with a proud face, well-chiseled, the skin a clear olive. The first garrison at Fort Steilacoom consisted of infantry and not cavalry; and the officer in charge at the time

of the attack on Seattle is not characterized in the "Commandant," though the latter stands for several able men who were stationed in the Northwest at an early period, all of whom distinguished themselves in the Civil War.

THE STRAIN OF WHITE

I

THE WINE OF SPRING

JUST to breathe was a delight. It had rained through the night and the sun on the wet needles brought out the pungency of hemlock and fir. Dripping umbrellas of fern were touched with gilt tracery; they swayed and tipped to the soft chinook, and the Oregon current flared on the jungle a flaming torch. The trail stretched away a narrow and intricate pattern of spangled lace, over which Barnabee stepped with playful caution, as on the meshes of a net. He lifted a sensitive ear to his master's chirrup, and sprang at the sharper warning to the lagging packhorse. Both animals knew each fluctuation of Haworth's whistle, now birdlike, coaxing, now flutelike, peremptory; and already, during those few hours of travel from the Hudson Bay post of Nisqually, they had learned a new note. It meant time to loiter and browse in snatches; and it was a note, long and insistent, that drifted and lingered on the great stillness in a caress, for the wine of spring was in the rider's veins.

Presently Barnabee threw his head with an in-

quiring neigh. He was answered by a near whinny, and the coming traveller rounded a bend in the trail. She sat her spotted pony squaw-wise, with skirts tucked in, limbs bound in deerskin leggins, a red blanket rolled behind her, between two large and beautifully woven baskets, laden to the brims and covered with cedar matting. But her face was hardly Indian. It was too much an oval. The clear-cut features were too finished, the skin too light a tan, and the thick hair, falling in two braids below the gay handkerchief which bound her head, was a soft and burnished chestnut. Even the eyes, almost of animal brilliancy, held in their midnight depths a sleeping promise.

She drew her bridle and, unmindful of the wet salal that drenched her knee, made room for the passing horseman. But her face lighted with recognition and she gave him a shy "Clahowya! Clahowya!"

Haworth answered the salutation and stopped.

"Why, Francesca," he said, and watched the changing color in her face with the eyes of a man who finds it good to see; "what a surprise and what luck. You know I hate lunching alone just a shade less than going hungry, and I had made up my mind that I must, here at the spring."

She shook her head in protest. "I am late now, for sure, Billee," and her voice, holding the Indian deliberateness, lost the guttural and became a musical contralto; "French Marie made me so mooch tro'ble."

"Trouble? But come back to the spring, and while you tell me I'll show you how that cook, François, at the new barracks can handle a pheasant. I shot two brace yesterday and presented them to the Commandant, and his daughter saw that I brought one of them away in my lunch-box. He is a fine man, is the Commandant, and Miss Lucia — well — it takes time to tell about her."

His hand was on the bridle and she allowed him to start the spotted pony back around the curve, beyond which the spring broke clear and cold from a low bluff and rushed noisily across the trail. They dismounted and the young man brought the lunch-box from his saddle-bag, and opened it on a flat granite rock, under the heavy boughs of a cedar. The earth was dry there, and the girl seated herself on a moss-grown trunk and added her meagre portion to the fare.

"I have only some black bread that Père La Framboise gave to me," she said, "and a little mowitch that a Nisqually Indian brought to him. It ees best I doant ask something more of French Marie."

"The venison looks prime," Haworth answered, dividing the pheasant. "You can trust old La Framboise to get the best out of the Indians. But why could you ask nothing of French Marie? I'll warrant you earn all you can ever need, and more."

She shook her head slowly, in self-depreciation. "I have stay to her house long tam; since I was small papoose and Père La Framboise found me by

my dead mother on the Bitter Root trail. And Marie has be ver' good to me, for sure. I doant have to work so hard. She laks me to learn the French of the curé; and you know 'bout one tam, when he was go down the Cowli'z to the mission by Vancouver she let me go with him and stay a year to the French Sisters' school. Oh, yes, Marie ees be ver' good to me, but it ees tam I go, for, Billee" — she paused, and, meeting Haworth's look, the beautiful color rose and died in her face; her black lashes fell, — "for — I have tole her I will not — marry — Baptiste."

"But Baptiste Lamont is a fine-looking young fellow, Francesca; and the best voyageur, the most daring in a canoe, from Puget Sound to the Columbia."

"Oh, yes, I un'stand 'bout that," she said and smiled; "French Marie says he ees mooch too good for no-'count half-breed girl lak me. But I doant want to marry him, Billee; sacré, no. It ees lak I marry my brother. And I have rip'ly to her, 'I think so too, Marie; it ees mooch best Baptiste finds some nice white girl over by Vancouver.' "

Haworth threw back his head with a short, gay laugh. "And then, Francesca; then?"

"That ees mek her ver' mad, Billee, for sure. So that I come quick 'way. And I find Père La Framboise in that new plas of his garden, where mooch roots of alder and hazel ees all 'round; and because they catch his hoe and mek gre't tro'ble, he, too, ees mad lak Marie. And he strikes hard and fast lak this, and jumps so and so, lak he ees keel some first snakes of spring."

She had left her seat to imitate the Jesuit's gestures with her shapely half-bared arms; stamping down imaginary obstructions with her small moccasined feet, until her auditor clapped his hands, and clapped again, sending peal on peal of merriment through the wood.

Finally she stopped and drew her lithe figure erect with a full intake of breath. "The holy father must give himself mooch absolution next confession day," she said gravely, "because he ees so mad at those alder stumps, and because he ees sing one sinful song. I have learn it before, when I leesten, sometams, by the cedar trees outside his garden, but to-day, sacré, it must wake those Siwashes who sleep long in far Skyue. But leesten, Billee, it ees lak this."

She paused, nodding her head slightly, as one who catches a distant measure, then her voice broke deep, full, clear, note on note beautiful, the words the French of the Jesuit; the score the aria of Fra Diavolo.

Haworth got to his feet in astonishment. She sang on, forgetting him, voice swelling in passion, supple body swaying, eyes flashing strange lights into the encroaching thicket. She finished. The refrain died in far hemlock reaches. Her glance returned and the fire went out.

"Francesca," he said. "Francesca. You bundle of heat. You — you — little firebrand."

"Firebrand." She smiled, pleased with the word. "It ees so Père La Framboise ees call me. 'Thou

firebrand, sent to punish the heretic and save convert' Indians.' But I doant un'stand all he ees tell me, Billee; he talks so mooch. I only know he wants me to go back to the convent and learn be a nun. Mon Dieu, I am not able. It ees not pos'ble I stay lak that to the house, and wear those long black clothes of the sisters. And I say to him, 'Merci, mon père, I lak to do that for you, who have so long tam do mooch for me, but, for sure, I am not able. I am so use to be out doors; and I lak so mooch Skookum, mon little horse.' Sacré, Billee, I can't give him up; that ees lak I lose a brother."

"It would be worse than that, Francesca. It would be burying yourself, alive. But what did the curé say, then?"

"He ees say, 'You have left Marie's house; you will not marry Baptiste; where else can you go, Francesca?' And I ees rip'ly, 'I am going over the mountains now, to-day, to my uncle Kam-i-ah-kan, the Yakima.'"

"Over the mountains? Do you mean you are starting for the Cedar River trail to the Pass? Now, alone, with the spring rains and sun on the winter snows?"

"I go by Cedar River, yes. But to-night I stay to Tyee Leschi's camp, and it ees pos'ble I am quick 'nough to go with his Nisquallies who go over the mountains to the beeg council of the Governor. But I am not 'fraid, and Skookum ees have the long wind. Once he ees swim Snoqualmie; and that tam Baptiste ees bring him to me from Kam-i-ah-kan, he ees

cross the gre't Columbia, merci, where two fine horses of Vancouver soldiers ees be drown'."

"Skookum is a fine little horse." Haworth's glance moved to the spotted pony. "I'll warrant he was sired by an Arabian, rounded out of some old hidalgo's herd, far southward; or, perhaps, he was even foaled there, on some Spanish rancho. But you don't mean to stay there, Francesca, in the camp of the Yakimas?"

"I doant know 'bout that, Billee, for sure. Mebbe Kam-i-ah-kan doant want me. He doant ever see me. He ees just hear Baptiste spik little 'bout me, sometams, when he ees go to the Yakima for Hudson Bay Companee. That ees how he ees happeen send me Skookum, my little horse. And Baptiste ees tell me those Yakimas ees diffrent; not so mooch lak Nisqually Indians, but smart, and rich and fine; and no tyee ees so gre't lak my uncle Kam-i-ah-kan. So, I lak see him once; and, Billee, it ees pos'ble he ees going help me find my white father."

Haworth turned his face, looking off through the trees. After a moment he said, "He was a soldier?"

"Yes. Père La Framboise ees spik 'bout that; he ees beli've it ees pos'ble my father ees fine officier, because I be'n all tam so diffrent, so smart. Sacré, if that ees true, and I am able find him, and live some little tam to his house, mebbe I learn to be fine, lak those ladies of the Governor. You think so, Billee?" She moved a step towards him, eager, expectant, "You beli've I am able, yes?"

His lips moved, shaping and discarding words.

A flush rose and died in his face. "Of course," he stammered at last, "of course. Only — if he should be — like that — a great man — wouldn't it better to let him find you? I know you are the brightest, the prettiest girl in the settlements, but — well — what does Father La Framboise say?"

The brightness went out of her face; she drew herself straight. "He ees say mebbe so fine officier ees going be 'shame my Indian blood. But I rip'ly, 'Mon père, you forget 'bout my mother was a Yakima; not some poor Nisqually squaw.' Then he ees speak mooch I doant un'stand and ees call me 'Thou Firebrand!' And when he ees feenish I ees say, 'But leesten, mon père; you forget my father doant ever see me. It ees pos'ble he doant know 'bout me, for sure. He was gone long tam when I came so small papoose by those Bitter Root Mountains. Mebbe he doant know how my mother ees die in the snow by the trail. It ees pos'ble he came back to look for her and was not able find her.'"

Her lip trembled; a sudden mist softened her eyes; she looked off across the stream.

"And then?" said Haworth breaking the pause.

"Then the curé ees speak diffrunt. He ees say, 'Go, then, my daughter; ask Kam-i-ah-kan who ees your white father. And the Gre't Spirit go with you.' And he meks the sign of cross, and holds his hands so — and I feel in me, right 'way, the heart of a man."

She lifted her noble head. Her face settled in purpose, high resolve. She moved a few steps towards

her horse and stopped, looking back at Haworth. "I can't be nun to the convent, Billee; and I can't be no'-count half-breed girl to the camp of the poor Nisquallies. Sacré, no. I must be white, all white, and live to my father's house, or I stay to the co'ntry of the Yakimas, to be Klickitat." She paused and the Indian in her wakened. Instantly she was transformed. "You un'stand, Billee, Klickitat. All Klickitat."

Haworth shivered. He was brave, as, in those times all men of the Northwest must be, but, in his brief career, he had learned something of the measure of Klickitat wickedness. The bare meaning of the word, applied to fierce bands of Indians who made sudden swoops over the Cascade Mountains, in attacks on the quieter coast dwellers, was robbers; and there came over the boy, looking into Francesca's face, the appalling significance of white intelligence coupled with Klickitat cupidity.

"Oh, no," he said quickly, "no. You think so, but when the time came it would be impossible; the white is too strong, too fine in you. Francesca, think. I have told you, often, you are fairer than the Señoritas I knew at Monterey. Why, among them you would seem pale. And, after all, your father, if he once saw you, must acknowledge you. In spite of everything he couldn't help loving you. Wait, Francesca, listen." She halted in uncertainty. He moved nearer and laid his hand on her arm. "See here, see here, I want to show you my guitar. I doubt you ever saw one, and, ever since I left the

Post, I've been casting about for an excuse to turn off to French Marie's and show you the instrument. Come, Francesca, I may not see you again for months; stay just ten minutes more."

She allowed him to draw her back to the seat on the cedar trunk. The heat in her face went out and she watched him, with growing interest, while he walked to his horse and unstrapped, from behind the saddle, the green bag containing the guitar.

"I found it waiting for me at the Post," he said returning to his place. "It belonged to the Señora I knew so well, while I spent those two years studying mathematics with the priests at Monterey. She had sent it North by a Nez Perce Indian, and it was forwarded from their mission by Baptiste, when he came home from his last trip to the upper Columbia."

While he spoke he drew off the cover, and, opening the case, lifted the prize to his knee. Francesca watched him, leaning forward a little, in wonder, while he tuned the strings.

"The Señora," he continued thoughtfully, "wrote that she had little use for the instrument, now; it was meant for the young and happy. But she is not old, Francesca; I am surprised at that letter, and that she could part with this guitar. She loved it; and she played and sang immensely well. It was she who taught me. But — do you know? — I had only to take it in my hands again, and they caught the old trick, directly."

The Wine of Spring

11

The measure swelled through the thicket, and his voice, a pleasing tenor, gaily took up the words:

"List, 'twill be well for thee, List while I tell for thee,
What magic spell for thee I have in store.
Art can not make it, doubt can not shake it,
Yet but once break it! 'Twill heal no more!
No, 'twill heal no more! No, 'twill heal no more!"

The girl listened, breathless, and he watched her, a half-smile on his lips, to the end of the song:

"'Tis a rare talisman, so wondrous powerful,
That in one hour full health will restore.
Worlds would not buy it. Come, love, do try it,
I only ask thee try and no more."

"So, you like it, Francesca. I knew you would. But that was not one of the Señora's songs. It is a new one I learned of Miss Lucia, while I was at the garrison. There was a ball on board the *Decatur*, down in the harbor, and, when we were tired of dancing, we took the instrument out in the moonlight on the forward deck. You should hear her; even the Señora hadn't that touch, and her voice — her voice made me think of a young thrush."

His hand trailed over the strings, repeating the final measure; then his glance moved absently through the trees, and the guitar rested an interval idly, on his knee.

"She is so fair; I did not know a woman could be so beautiful until that first day I saw her." His look returned, and meeting Francesca's, he shook his handsome head. "It was at Cowlitz landing, and

she was coming with her mother, up from the Columbia in the Governor's canoe. But I did not see her, directly; Baptiste was at the bow paddle, and his big shoulders hid her. I was having trouble, too, with the horses. Baldy bolted and shook his pack, and, for a moment, Barnabee refused to round him in. It was then she laughed, a laugh to turn a man's head, and the canoe swinging broadside, I saw her there amidships, the late sun on her, a woman of light, of snow; a woman to make a man dream."

He laughed softly, and flushing, half-ashamed of the sentiment, ran his fingers again over the strings. Presently he found another accompaniment and began to sing:

"The sun shines bright on the old Kentucky home,
The old Kentucky home so far away."

And again Francesca listened, breathless; her eyes seemed to gather depth. It was as though the sleeping soul in her stirred. The refrain ran along the bluff and died in distant hemlock reaches. "So, you like that, too, Francesca; and even better than the other. Well, it's a favorite of mine. Perhaps, because my mother used to tell me stories of Kentucky, when I was a little fellow and she held me on her lap. I can't remember her in any way but that. And Kentucky was her home."

He repeated the chorus gently, and laid the instrument in her arm. "Try it," he said. "Try it; the trick is easy."

She held the guitar reverently, listening with critical ear, while her slim brown fingers sought the notes. And Haworth, leaning towards her, hummed slowly:

"Then weep no more, my lady; weep no more to-day,
For we'll sing one song of the old Kentucky home,
The old Kentucky home so far away."

"You have it," he exclaimed at last. "You have it. But you have the gift, Francesca; music was born in you. And you must have an instrument of your own. Yes, and when my father sends me down again to the Post, and he will need supplies soon for the men he is putting to work on the new military road, I shall ask the factor to order a guitar for you, straight from Quebec."

She rose to her feet, and turned her face to him in mingled incredulity and delight. "Oh, Billee,"

her voice vibrated a softer note, "you ees be so good to me. But byme by, when you ees find me to my father's house, you ees going see I learn to play this muck fine; mebbe I am able to sing, too, lak that yo'ng thrush."

She gave him the instrument and moved in haste to her horse. She carried her head high, and the fine resolve again transfigured her face.

Haworth gathered the neglected luncheon into his box, and, adding to it from his saddlebag, strapped it to one of her laden baskets. "There is your venison untouched," he said; "and boiled ham with a tin of biscuits from the Post. You will need more on the long trail, but Tyee Leschi will help you."

"Merci, Billee, closh tillicum;" and she added, her voice falling to almost a whisper, "It ees not you ees going be 'shame, sometam, of Francesca; for sure, no."

"I, ashamed of you? Why, I'm proud of you. Don't you know that?" He moved a little to look up into her face. A sudden pity softened his own. "Francesca, little comrade" — and obeying his impulse he reached and taking her face between his palms, drew it down and kissed her — "good-by and — good luck."

He stepped aside. The color surged to her temples; her lashes fell. Then she spoke to her horse, and he broke into his easy lope, moving in the direction of the Indian village.

II

A RIDING - LESSON AND A WAGER

LUCIA drew in her horse and, throwing the Lieutenant a glance over her shoulder, leaned back lightly in her saddle and laughed and laughed. "Oh," she said, as the gray troop horse lunged to a stop beside El Capitan, and the young officer, hatless, was given a moment to gather breath, "how can I hope to ever make a cavalier man of you? Do you think Trumpeter is a ship's boat?" she added with fresh trills of merriment, "that you must sit like a sailor in a swell, holding your bridle like — a pair — of oars?"

The Lieutenant shifted the rein wholly to his left hand and, watching Trumpeter's ears warily, drew out his handkerchief and hastily wiped his brow. "But I'm learning, Miss Lucia," he said and set his square jaw, "I'm learning. I know already that he won't turn to starboard if I bear to port."

Her horse wheeled and her glance, moving over the trail that cut a swathe through the green Nisqually plain, rested on a dark blot. "Then," she said, with sudden and sweet gravity, "you should find it easy to ride back and pick up your cap."

But the Lieutenant did not hurry. Her lids

drooped a little, and the long curling lashes hid the meaning in her eyes, but she could not altogether control the curve of her beautiful short upper lip. She mocked him; he was sure of it, but, even then, from the top of her wilful head to the hem of her green riding skirt, she was the most alluring bit of womanhood that ever had held his glance. The wind, drawing from the unseen harbor, beyond the narrowed timber belt, blew a loose spiral of blond hair across her face. She brushed it aside. "Billy Haworth," she added, and gave him a covert look, "can turn Barnabee in a flash, and catch that sombrero of his before it touches the ground. But he is the best horseman, the finest figure —"

The Lieutenant did not wait to hear the finish of that tribute to another man. He pulled the troop horse around and started back for his cap. Lucia sat watching him. The lurking imps of mischief rose and danced openly in her eyes. She allowed the young officer to reach the place, but, at the critical moment, while he lumbered cautiously over Trumpeter's side to pick up the cap, she touched El Capitan lightly and bore down at a gallop. Instantly the troop horse was off, leading the way to the garrison, while the Lieutenant, unhorsed, gathered himself up from the trail.

Lucia made a detour around him through the tall grass, and drew in El Capitan once more. "Oh," she cried, between ripples of laughter, "if you could only see yourself as I — do. You are the fun-niest — the funni-est — bundle — on a horse."

The Lieutenant brushed a streak of damp soil from his trouser's leg and drew his fine frame erect. "I'm not on a horse, now, Miss Lucia, and I probably won't be for some time." He shook his head and his glance moved to the travelling troop horse, making still for the distant barracks. "I hope Trumpeter won't give that old sergeant trouble."

"Oh, you can trust Trumpeter to go straight to the stables, but I'm afraid Walters will never let you mount his horse again; he's the crustiest old grenadier in the army. It's too bad," she added, with elusive sympathy, "when father's charger won't so much as allow you to set a foot in the stirrup."

"But he will, Miss Lucia; yes, in time, he will. And if I can't have Trumpeter to-morrow, I'll find another horse. I'll ride in the end, if it leaves every mount in the company demoralized."

"But, now, you must walk." Lucia's head tipped upward so that the lashes veiled her eyes, and she went on with suspiciously sweet gravity, "It's about four miles to the harbor, taking the cut through the timber, and three back to the garrison."

The Lieutenant understood. She was luring him to tramp back at once, on the heels of Trumpeter, and brave out the barracks ridicule. "But," he answered easily, "we must be much nearer the trading post; we saw the stockade clearly, just before we came under range of those trees." He paused, squaring his shoulders on the garrison and the vanishing horse, to look in the direction of Fort Nisqually, hidden, at the moment, behind a clump

of firs. All around, at wide intervals, the big spaces were broken by these trees, rising like single sentries, oftener grouping like an advance guard of the battalions that encircled the great plain. "And," he went on, "we started for the Post, you remember. We wanted to see those fine silver fox peltries, that voyageur Baptiste said had been brought down by Northern Indians. We started, Miss Lucia, and" — his glance returned and he smiled — "it's my way to keep on."

"Come then," she answered, and turned her horse; "and if Billy Haworth hasn't started for the Naches trail, I'll coax him to lend you Barnabee."

The Lieutenant had seen the young thoroughbred. Not a week ago, on the barracks square, he had seen Haworth keep his saddle through some intricate manoeuvres; and the officer had told himself the horse was as full of caprice, as undependable, as this spirited woman; but he strode forward at El Capitan's neck in silence, and let the taunt go.

"Walking," she said presently, "walking is the best exercise for a naval man. It tones all the muscles evenly; keeps down his weight." She cunningly put her horse to a pace, but instantly the Lieutenant caught the bridle and pulled him in. "All the older officers grow top-heavy," she went on. "When I think of one of them, bearing down a ballroom, like a ship staggering under full sail, I'm determined never to marry into the navy."

El Capitan broke again, but again the Lieutenant was ready awkwardly yet effectually, to draw him

down. "But you will, Miss Lucia," and he smiled up into her face; "I swear you will."

"Take care," she said, and her eyes flashed wide; "no one in all the garriçon says that to me. I do as I will, and it's always — the unexpected."

"But you will marry into the navy," he persisted; "You will, Miss Lucia, and — within a year."

"I will not," she cried with growing heat. "I wager — I wager El Capitan against the best silver fox peltry at Nisqually, I will not marry into the navy."

Instantly he raised his hand to clasp hers in agreement. "But I make it two of those peltries, Miss Lucia; I'm told El Capitan is a good horse."

At this the derision bubbled again to her lips. "Oh," she said, "you are the rashest man I ever knew. You can never hope to pay your debts, unless you look for promotion and — better pay."

The amusement went out of the Lieutenant's face. "When opportunity knocks I shall not be sleeping. I may even go to meet it half-way. And I hope, Miss Lucia" — his voice shook a little — "I hope it will come soon."

"How can it? Anchored at Steilacoom harbor, or cruising along the villages of the miserable Nisquallies. What a pity —" Again her manner changed; her eyes, meeting his, softened with elusive sympathy. "What a pity you chose the navy. Think. If you were only in the cavalry you might ride to meet that opportunity to-morrow, any day, among the fierce Cayuses or Yakimas. But here, on

the quarter-deck of the Decatur, a hundred miles from danger, and with that breastwork between!"

She finished with an expressive gesture backward, in the direction of the Cascade Mountains, stretching above the eastern timber belt a mighty barricade, and her horse, startled by the movement, sprang and settled into a canter; but, rounding the clump of firs, Lucia, herself, drew rein. At the same moment Francesca, on her way from the Nisqually village to the tepees of the Yakimas, stopped at the junction of a by-path, and backed her spotted pony to give the other rider room.

She said a soft "Clahowya," then flushing, suddenly ashamed of the Indian word, added hastily, "Bon jour, mademoiselle. Monsieur, bon jour."

It was the Lieutenant, who, having overtaken the horse, answered the salutation. His look rested on her face in surprise. But Francesca gave him little attention. She watched Lucia, shyly curious, with a growing pleasure, almost reverence, in her eyes.

Lucia passed her with a swift side glance, but presently, while Francesca rode on, skirting the trees, she turned in her saddle to send back a scrutinizing look. "That must be the girl Billy Haworth told me about," she said. "She rides a spotted pony with Arabian points; and she is pretty, yes, for a half-Indian, she is pretty. You think so too, Lieutenant?"

"Pretty, Miss Lucia, is hardly the word. I've seen beauties along the Mediterranean who must have given her the palm." He walked on at the

neck of the horse. "Jove," he added after a moment, "if that girl has Indian blood in her veins, it must be different from any I have seen on Puget Sound. I had sooner believe her Spanish. But she spoke in French; who is she?"

Lucia fluted her brows. "I don't know her," she answered coolly. "I never saw her before; but I think she is a girl they call Francesca. Her father, I have heard, was a soldier; her mother a Yakima squaw."

They moved on in silence. The Lieutenant's glance was directed straight ahead, where the trading post, across another grassy stretch, rose against a background of forest. Lucia also, from her higher position, watched indifferently the bulging upper story of the massive octagonal fort that overtopped the stockade.

"It baffles me," the Lieutenant exclaimed at last, and, shaking his head, he smiled up at Lucia once more. "It's mighty strange, but she — that girl we just passed — reminds me of some one I've known; yet I can't remember who or where."

III

A HUNTER OF THE PLAINS

FRANCESCA halted, breathing her horse on a breadth of level. All around her the mountains pushed their heads and shoulders above the timber belt and lifted mighty fingers in perpetual menace, out of glaciers and snow. The Pass, which stretched behind her a winding amethyst vista, still narrowed before her, a thread of way. Under the spring thaw, the trail was fast becoming a chain of alternate morass and pitfall. Frost bound the heights by night and, melting at midday, drilled and split the rock, creating avalanches; while numberless rivulets, gushing down precipitous slopes, undermined and honeycombed the winter snow-drifts. Sometimes the sound of a cataract, cutting its granite flume, broke the great silence, and rang from cliff and spur a multiplied bombardment.

Skookum pushed on pluckily, with muzzle low, picking foothold, eager as his rider to overtake the small company, travelling to the Governor's council, that she had been too late to join at the Indian village. In spongy places she saw the fresh moccasin tracks of the runners, and the hoof prints of the ponies, in ice-coated shallows, had not yet glazed

over. At last she gained the divide. The sun, low in the West, dipped slowly behind a ragged shoulder, and the gorge below her filled with an Alpine glow. Then, suddenly, not half a mile away, against the black front of a butte, she counted three swift-moving figures.

They were the last of the band of Nisquallies. Another moment and they passed beyond the sharp outline of the cliff and were gone. She hurried on, making short cuts where she could to avoid the windings of the trail, and Skookum, striking the down grade, expressed his satisfaction in a repeated neigh. But presently he floundered through a bog and set his forefeet on yielding snow. He tried again, struggled, made the bank and moved cautiously out on the field, which filled the defile between narrowing walls. Finally he halted, threw his head in remonstrance, wheeled, obeyed the rein reluctantly, feeling step by step, and suddenly swung back.

Francesca dismounted and, going the length of her bridle, alternately coaxed on and upbraided him. "Charco, Skookum, charco. Ees you so mooch 'fraid we lose the trail of those Nisqually cayuses? Doant you see we ees going to catch them quicker 'cross this snow? Skookum, Skookum, doant be cross. Charco. Charco."

The pony gathered himself and jumped. In the same instant Francesca dropped the bridle to spring out of his way. The crust broke under the horse's weight and he fell, down, down, striking the rocky wash of a hidden stream.

The girl sank on her knees on the brink of the chasm. "Skookum," she cried, in an agony of affection and fear. "Skookum, mon tenas cayuse (my little horse). Oh, Skookum."

The pony moved, struggled half up, and sank back. The icy torrent washed his side. She got to her feet and running, leaping where she must, made her way down to the end of the field and found the mouth of the tunnel. Its arch dropped low in places, but she pushed up between huge boulders that pilared the snow roof, around others that dammed the current in cascades, and at last reached the horse. "Skookum," she entreated, "you can't be hurt mooch. Skookum, mon tenas cayuse, you must not — die!"

Tears rained down her face, but she stooped, over moccasins in water, and freed him of his pack; and taking the bit, coaxed and scolded him up. A long, deep hurt opened on his flank; still he was able to stand, and presently took a few steps. She laid her cheek a moment on his neck. "So, Skookum, it ees you un'stand all tam. Sacré, yes, but I ees make you come."

One basket had been crushed under the pony and she quickly separated its contents, discarding what she must. The remaining one, together with her blankets, she took on her shoulders, placing the woven carrying strap, squaw-wise, on her forehead, and urged the pony slowly down the tunnel. The wet load drenched her; she splashed in ice-water sometimes to her knees; and she was forced to halt repeatedly,

while Skookum's shaking legs gave under him and he dropped his muzzle to the wash. So, finally, she groped her way out into the open.

The wind piping through the defile was sharp with frost. It stiffened her wet clothing, but she coaxed Skookum a little farther to the shelter of some scrubby pines, the first ranks of the trees. Then, while twilight lingered, she hurried to gather dead branches and kindled a camp-fire. And on the windward side she laced other limbs in a rude circular frame, spreading over it one of the blankets. It held the heat and, for an interval, steam from the drying wool poured through the small entrance in a cloud.

Skookum was bedded where this wickiup made a partial windbreak, and, searching in the basket for a bundle of herbs, she brewed a liniment for his hurt. The night was far spent when she left him, covered with the remaining blanket, and, creeping into her shelter, settled herself wearily, her head pillowed on her arm, her feet to the fire, for a brief rest. At dawn there was a flurry of snow, but the wintry sun, peering between trailing ends of cloud into the Pass, found her admonishing the pony, once more, along the trail.

"Look, Skookum," she said at last. "You see down there that nice Lac of Kitchelas? So, we ees going find mooch fine grass there, and stay long tam to make you strong. Charco, mon tenas cayuse, charco."

She had given up hope of overtaking the Nis-

quallies, and, when she drew near the lake, and, coming to a small stream, found the embers of their camp-fire on the bank, she picketed her horse for the promised respite. But Skookum refused the new grass that carpeted the sunny open. His legs doubled under him. He rolled to his side.

Francesca bent over him with clouding brows. She dressed his hurt again with the liniment, and, repeatedly, while she cut fresh boughs for a shelter, she returned from the thicket to speak to her little horse. All her own body ached from her exposure in the Pass, and finally, when she had completed her bower, setting the fir branches in two walls against a low bluff and roofing them, she went to the fire and, scattering the embers, bared several hot rocks. Over these she constructed the frame of a wickiup, more finished than the one she had built in the Pass, and, covering it with her blankets, she created a steam by pouring water on the stones.

She came from this bath fresh and glowing. The stains of travel were removed from her clothing, and she seated herself on a boulder to braid her hair. Unbound, it rippled almost to the ground. It had the shine of satin and the shade of velvet; and, presently, under her grooming, it took burnished tones hinting of copper in the sun.

Suddenly she arrested her stroke. She turned her face towards the mouth of the stream, listening. The next moment a rider, skirting the barrens, which broke precipitously there, came through the wood and out into the open. The brush dropped from

Francesca's hand. She got to her feet in wonder. She never had seen a man like this before. He sat his mettlesome brown mount without a saddle, guiding him by a single ribbon of buckskin tied around the jaw. His right hand closed over a rifle that rested horizontally back of the withers; behind him the body of a deer was thrown across the horse and secured by thongs. Both of his powerful arms were bare, but the tawney pelt of a cougar, newly taken, was flung across one shoulder. The other, nude from the column of his bead-encircled neck, was the shoulder of an athlete. His hair, cut in a short fringe on the forehead, was divided in two braids, and a solitary hawk's quill overtopped the parting. His features were sharply cut; his eyes were brilliant, alert. But he passed very close to the girl without seeming to see her, carrying his chin high, his thin nostril dilating a little, and rode directly down into the ford.

Three other hunters, like him young, all finely proportioned, all well mounted, followed him. And Francesca, forgetting the usual Chinook "Clahowya," stood watching them, the wonder in her face blending with awe. One by one they splashed down into the stream, on over, up the farther bank and were lost in the trees.

Then, presently, while she still watched that point where they had disappeared, the first rider returned. He came to the opposite bank of the stream, and drawing his horse in, sat motionless, steadily regarding her. He might have been an Apollo in bronze.

His gaze held Francesca's. Her breath quickened and deepened; the color came and went in her face. When the wind lifted her hair with a swirl, dropping it again, so that it fell all about her like a wonderful cloak, his eyes burned. But at last he turned, and, as silently as he had come, rode away.

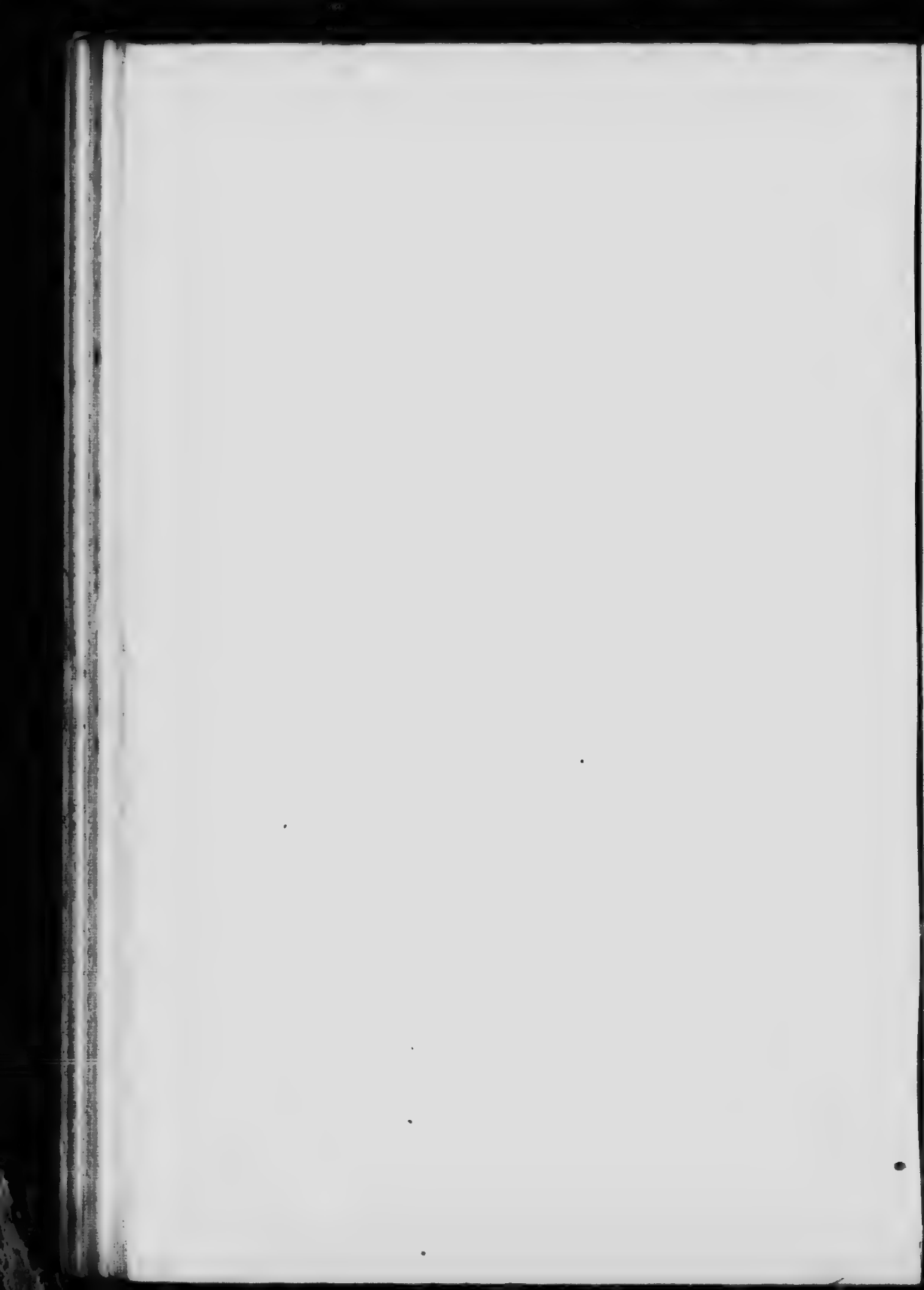
Skookum whinnied. She started and looked at him. He was on his feet, and he repeated the call, going the length of his picket rope, after the retreating horse. In a little while he sought the new grass and began to browse.

"So, Skookum," she said, "so, that ees good. I be'n so mooch 'fraid you ees hurt inside. I ees pray all night to the holy mother, bout that, and sometams, when I am too mooch scare', I ask Tyee Saghalee to doant let you be." She paused, drawing close to the feeding pony. "And now," she added, shaking her head, "now I doant know if it ees her, or Indian God ees leesten best."

She started back to her seat on the rock, and stooping to pick up the fallen brush resumed her interrupted work. She divided her hair and began to weave one of the thick braids. Her glance moved across the stream and rested on the place where the horseman had disappeared, then, after a moment, she looked up in the other direction, where the Pass lifted, a darker shade of purple cutting the amethyst heights. "But, Skookum," she said with final conviction, "it ees best we say Aves to Tyee Saghalee, when we ees feenish hers."



"His gaze held Francesca's."
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IV

THE TRAIL OF THE BROWN HORSE

THAT night the bower against the bluff did not shelter Francesca. With the approach of twilight she lifted her pack to her shoulders and urged the jaded pony down into the stream. She pushed up the current, wading where she must, clinging herself, where she could, of the tops of nearly submerged boulders which formed stepping-stones. When a wider pool or a rapid forced her to the bank, she chose her way with Indian precaution and covered her trail.

At last she came into a small pocket-like canyon. The brook, flowing from some hidden snow-field, high up, plunged in a double cascade over the cliff that walled the place in. She could go no farther, and, picketing Skookum, she made preparation for a new camp. But she kindled no fire, and, while the slow Northern twilight lingered, she continually watched the entrance of the gorge. Night deepened; the stars came big and near in the clear atmosphere; still she waited, seated on a rock and wrapped in her blanket, with her eyes turned in the direction of the lake. Finally, when she stretched her tired body on her bed of boughs,

she started to her elbow repeatedly, listening, and she fell asleep with her rosary in her hands.

Night passed. The sun found and leisurely searched that little pocket of the mountains, and went on his way; long shadows reached out from the cliff; it was hardly mid-afternoon. Then, suddenly, the pony stopped browsing. He tramped, pulling at his lariat. For another moment he stood, head high, sensitive ears playing, and looked down stream.

Francesca ran to him. She threw her arms around his neck and, almost lifted off her feet, drew his muzzle in a great clinging clasp against her breast. "Mon Dieu, Skookum," she commanded softly, "be still."

The horse swung, shaking her off, but his neigh, weakened, was lost in the roar of the cataract. He tramped again, restlessly, and again she clung to him until his challenge was drowned by the waterfall. Then he quieted down, and, in a little while, dropped his muzzle once more to the springing grass.

That second night, also, Francesca kindled no fire. She kept a later vigil; not in stoic patience, but keying herself continually to her need. Sometimes that keen-edged intuition, inherited from an unknown white fore-mother, played on her until her whole sensitive young body trembled, and under her blanket, her fingers, telling the rosary, closed on the cross in a tightening grip. But, when at last she slept, she grasped her camp knife, unsheathed in her hand.

Dawn came. Another day dragged quietly to a

close. Then, on the third morning, she ventured a small fire, over which she cooked two trout that she had trapped in the stream. An hour later she left her refuge. She followed the brook, her only way out, back towards the mouth. The water was rising; in low places it was running through the undergrowth along the banks; but the pony, almost recovered from his fall, pushed around pluckily, across rough and unbroken ground, until, suddenly, he struck the track of a horse. It wound here and there through the chaparral, doubling aimlessly, as though the rider had been in search of something, or else uncertain of his course. And, from the brink of the overflow, where Skookum had picked up the trail, it returned in the direction of the open, where the road from the Pass dipped to the ford.

"Le diable," she exclaimed softly, "it ees lak I beli've; you ees call the brown horse, Skookum; you ees call him that tam, sacré yes; but, merci, he doant be able to hear."

The pony quickened his steps and brought her swiftly to the open. Here, undisturbed, was the frame of the wickiup which she had built over the hot stones left by the passing Nisquallies. No other camp-fire had since burned in the place; but, in the shelter that she had abandoned, the bed of boughs, packed down, disordered, showed plainly the stay of a transient lodger.

She hurried on across the ford, and, once more on a beaten trail, Skookum broke into his smart, easy lope; but always her glance moved faster, sifting

the wood around her, watching every curve ahead. So, ceaselessly expecting, never overtaking that ambush she feared, she came at last to the headwaters of the Yakima.

In level reaches the river was running over banks and she was forced to make wide detours, but she followed the crystal stream out through the foothills, down past the beautiful parks of pine, and saw, finally, the plains of eastern Washington, billowing gently away to the far ramparts of the Blue Mountains. The sun grew steadily warmer and everywhere, in the springing grass that crowded the retreating snows, flowers bloomed. Where the brilliant new green of the prairies met the vivid blue of the distant heights the color became an elusive violet light. And, scattered over the vast natural pasture, Francesca singled clearly in that rare atmosphere the numerous feeding bands of horses, or long-horned Spanish cattle of that powerful nation, of which her uncle Kam-i-ah-kan was the head.

She began to look eagerly for the first tepees, but a great silence brooded along the Yakima. Finally, at the close of the day, the ninth since she left the Nisqually village, she came upon a small encampment of old men and squaws. Here she learned that Kam-i-ah-kan had gone to the Walla Walla, where the allied tribes were gathering to meet Governor Stevens in council.

Francesca travelled with this little company, which was moving slowly in the wake of the multi-

tude, as far as the crossing of the Columbia. For the first time she saw the tepee of buffalo skin made into a flat bundle, containing the camp outfit, and launched on the river. She was given a place between two papooses, with a third in her lap, and the strange raft was taken in tow by a powerful horse. He started after the swimming herd; she felt the bulk heave under her and swing evenly into the channel, and she laughed. "Skookum," she called to the pony, who loitered suspiciously on the bank, "Skookum, mon tenas cayuse, charco."

Skookum plunged into the flood and followed pluckily across. After a brief halt Francesca mounted and hurried on alone. In a little while she came into a broad, beaten track. A party of Indians rode over a knoll and turned into the thoroughfare far in advance of her, and, at intervals, other groups appeared, coming from many directions, but all travelling the same way towards the Walla Walla. It was late in the afternoon when she drew her rein on a bench overlooking the beautiful valley. The mighty cliffs, which formed the gateway of the Columbia into the mountains, rose sharp and deeply blue against the reddening west; and below her, not half a mile distant, she saw the tributary near which Governor Stevens had chosen his council ground. Willows and cottonwoods fringed the shores, and around a stout log house, which contained the supplies and Indian goods, were ranged bough huts for the small military escort. Nearer, protected by a knoll, stood his Excellency's quarters, flanked by a large rustic

pavilion, improvised for a banqueting hall for the entertainment of the distinguished chiefs.

Francesca's eyes missed no detail of the white encampment; she was even able to single out the Governor's figure from the small group assembled on the knoll; but her glance moved on to the tepees beyond, which stretched an unbroken city for a distance of two miles. They made a strong and, in the red sunset, a barbarously picturesque showing; and when her look returned to rest on that small white company, the surprise in her face changed to chagrin. "Sacré, Skookum," she exclaimed. "How ees it the Governor doant bring plenty fine soldiers? Those Indians ees lak see all those nice buttons and fine swords and mooch good guns. Le diable, but the old chiefs ees going be cross to see the Governor is bring so small crowd, and the yo'ng chiefs ees going laugh, for sure."

Suddenly a shout rang behind her, and she wheeled her horse out of the course of an oncoming party. They were Indians, naked to the breech clout, and decked gorgeously with feathers and trinkets, but, like the company of hunters she had seen near the Pass, they were all athletes, and their horses had been picked from thousands. They carried the large American flag which was presented to the Nez Percés for help and friendliness after the Whitman massacre, and they rode in swift unison, close together, like a heroic group in bronze.

They passed Francesca, swung down from the bench and up the knoll, to plant the ensign before

the Governor. Then presently appeared the whole Nez Percés cavalcade; a thousand warriors, the flower of the nation, riding at a gallop, two abreast, their only bridle the thin buffalo line tied around the animal's lower jaw. The mounts, which were selected not only for their strength and fine action, but for singular markings, were gaudily painted in contrasting shades, — broad stripes of crimson on white coats, yellow or white on black or bay, — while their nude riders also were ornamented with brilliant and startling designs. Their gay feathers danced, their trinkets and great shields flashed in the late sun.

Halting and forming a single line they again advanced at a gallop and stopped below the knoll, while the head chief, accompanied by two others, rode slowly up, dismounted, and shook hands with the Governor. Many sub-chiefs followed, after which the whole body of horsemen dashed at full gallop in a wide circle around the hillock; breaking successively from one flank of the line, firing their guns, brandishing their shields with fierce shouts, now charging up as though to exterminate the little party on the summit, now wheeling back with wilder action and redoubled whooping. Then, finally, the great force rode away to that part of the valley reserved for their camp.¹

Francesca drew a full breath. "Sacré, Skookum,"

¹The authority for these references to the treaty councils may be found in the "Life of General Isaac I. Stevens," by his son Hazard Stevens.

she said, "Baptiste ees spik true; these Indians of prairie ees not mooch lak those poor Nisquallies." She paused a thoughtful moment smoothing the pony's coat under her hand. "Mebbe you ees got to have some paint on you, Skookum, but I lak best to see you nice brown and white. Hold yourse'f proud, mon tenas cayuse; hold yourse'f proud."

She turned the pony into the trail, then again drew her rein, while another great multitude moved out of the thoroughfare, taking a shorter, direct cut to the camping ground of the Nez Perces. It was the belated squaws, who, burdened with the camp equipage and the old people and children, hastened on to set up the tepees.

They trailed off into the twilight. The little group of whites disappeared from the knoll. Then suddenly a great loneliness overwhelmed Francesca. Kam-iah-kan never had seen her. He was a mighty chief busy, doubtless, with the affairs of the council. His favorite squaw might not venture now to disturb him; surely it was the wrong time for her to intrude. And where in all that tented city should she look for the small company of Nisquallies, or even for the band of friendly Indians she had met on the Yakima? No moment since she left the cabin of Marie, no hour in the solitudes of the mountains, had she more keenly felt her isolation than when, in the gathering darkness, at her journey's end, she looked down on the barbarous hosts of the plain.

V

"I AM FLYING HAWK"

HIS Excellency the Governor stood before the great open council chamber of poles and boughs, watching the departure of his courier, to whom he had given a dispatch for General Wool, in command of the Pacific troops and due to arrive by sea from San Francisco, on his tour of inspection to the lower Columbia.

A few steps from His Excellency, General Palmer, the superintendent of Indian affairs for Oregon, also watched the messenger. Presently he said, "If General Wool understands the situation he will remand that order for all Northwest troops to remain in barracks; this valley should be invested without delay."

"A man must see these conditions for himself to understand them, and General Wool's field covers a vast territory. The most I can hope for now, is that he will push his personal inspection as far as the Walla Walla."

His Excellency drew his hand across his forehead and moved on across the open reserved for the seating of the assembled tribes in council. The superintendent walked with him. "True," he said dryly, "true, a man must see these conditions for himself. For instance, if Congress could have been on the

ground those Donation Acts never would have been passed without consideration of the Indians; and we should not be here now, barely one hundred strong, to tell fourteen thousand of them to move off of this big fertile territory, which is theirs by every right, and crowd tribe on tribe, on such reservations as we may see fit to set aside."

"So, General," and His Excellency regarded his companion with his brief, conciliatory smile, "you still believe these treaties are impossible, or at least premature. I wish I could convince you they are late. It is five years since those Donation Acts threw the Northwest open to settlement. Any pioneer may choose his three hundred and twenty acres, and his wife as many more, regardless of Indian possession. These tribes have seen the whites passing, five, six, and ten thousand strong, every summer to the valleys of the lower Columbia. They have seen the Chinooks and Willamettes crowded out, and the tale of each wronged Indian has reached their ears. And, General, these are different people than the coast dwellers. We have to deal with fourteen thousand of the proudest, bravest, most intelligent, manliest Indians in America."

General Palmer nodded his head. "And the craftiest," he added.

"This nation of Eastern Washington is the first, in all my dealings with the Indians, to embody the ideals of fiction. I wish," — His Excellency paused, turning again on the General his brief, direct smile, — "I wish I could have shown the United States

Senate one example. I wish I could have introduced that great tyee Kam-i-ah-kan. His simple presence must have accomplished more than a whole day's argument. He is a man of splendid bearing, General; over six feet in his moccasins, grandly made, athletic. Sometimes he reminds me of a panther, again of a grizzly bear. But his countenance has an extraordinary play, one instant in smiles, the next in frowns, flashing with light and black as Erebus the same moment. His pantomime is immense; he speaks with his hands, his arms, so eloquently there is little need of an interpreter."

The superintendent nodded his head again in agreement. " I have seen Kam-i-ah-kan; but he has come from the Yakima country and gone into camp off there towards the Blue Mountains. He has not shown himself at the council. No sheik of the desert could hold himself more aloof, and yet so make himself felt; a perpetual menace."

" True," answered the Governor. " We have in Kam-i-ah-kan our strongest opposition. He has a wonderful influence over the young chiefs, and no sultan ever received an envoy more haughtily. When he was invited formally to attend the council he refused our gifts, saying he had never accepted anything from the whites, not even the value of a grain of wheat, without paying for it, and that he did not care to buy our presents. When I offered provisions, with the message his people were far from home and I did not want them to be hungry, he sent back word he needed nothing; the young

chief Flying Hawk had many feeding cattle and had supplied the Yakimas."

"Flying Hawk," repeated General Palmer. "You mean that distinguished looking young fellow who spoke at the morning session. He refused to sell his country. He had heard what the earth told him. It said, 'The Great Spirit made me for the Indian, to grow the camas for him, and grass for his horses and cattle.' The water spoke in the same way and he did not understand the treaty."

They were ascending the knoll and finished the rise in silence. The Governor still felt the effects of his long rough journey from Olympia by way of the Cowlitz, and his old hurt, troublesome since the Mexican war, harassed him anew. But on the summit he threw off his weariness like a cloak. He drew himself erect and his clear glance sought first the courier, already a distant blot on the plain, and, coming back slowly over the tented city, rested on the open reserved for athletic sports and races, in the valley directly below.

It was the hour of the daily contests, when the tribes assembled to see the young men test their strength and fleetness, and match their fine horses. Suddenly a great outcry announced the start of a foot race. It covered the usual course of four miles and the runners were escorted by numbers of mounted braves, who galloped behind and beside them, so close that to stop or even waver was at the risk of being run down.

The two officers watched this stirring spectacle

for a brief interval; then the Governor said, " No, this council is not premature. But the reserve of three millions of acres, which looked so ample on the Government chart at Washington, begins to seem appallingly small."

" And," said the superintendent, " Kam-i-ah-kan is not the only opposition. Flying Hawk is not the only chief who will not sell his country. The Umatillas are keeping aloof. Yellow Serpent, the great tyee of the Walla Wallas, has cautioned his young men to keep away from the camp of the whites. In short the sole chief on whom we may depend is Lawyer, the head of the Nez Perces."

" And Lawyer is a mighty support. He is a Solon to the tribes. He has been Christianized, educated, and he wears with pride one of those medals presented by Lewis and Clark to his grandfather for friendliness and help to the expedition."

" Still," persisted General Palmer, " your Excellency knows but for the close presence of these old allies we should not be standing here now. Beyond a doubt last night Lawyer thwarted a conspiracy to cut us off and confiscate the supplies; and outside the protection of these Nez Perces our lives would not be safe an hour."

" But we shall not pass beyond their protection, General; and I look to Lawyer to bring even Kam-i-ah-kan to terms."

His Excellency's voice dropped in caution and he laid his hand in warning on the superintendent's shoulder. Some one was approaching behind them

up the knoll. The two men waited, listening to the tramp of the unseen horse. Then Francesca's head lifted above the sharp pitch from the summit, and with a clatter of loose clods, Skookum gained the hill top. She had not yet painted his fine coat, but the light wind lifted a carefully crimped mane, and flaunted a wide red ribbon, which, tying the silken forelock, rose in a big, stiff bow between his erect ears.

The pony stopped and the Governor went towards her with a frank scrutiny. "I am sure I have seen you somewhere before," he said.

"But yes, Monsieur Governor, you ees see me one tam when you come with madame to look at those fine red roses of Père La Framboise, and I ees learn the French book to his garden. And once, when Cowlitz water was high, and you wait all night to the cabane of French Marie, I bring to you the supper of grouse she ees mek ready."

"I remember, I remember, you are Francesca. But you are a long way from home. What brought you? A message for me from Olympia?"

She shook her head. "I come to find Kam-i-ah-kan, the brother of my dead mother. He ees here to the council, yes?"

"No." A shadow settled over His Excellency's face. His glance moved off across the cottonwoods that marked the course of the stream, on over those vast spaces where the great chief hovered, and he repeated, unconsciously, the words he had used at the morning session. "At the council the great Yakima's seat is empty. When the head chiefs

speaking together Kam-i-ah-kan has nothing to say. He is not ashamed to speak, he is not afraid to speak, but his people have no voice.

There was a pause broken by a chorus of shouts from the multitude below the knoll. The Governor turned and looked down. A company of thirty horses were jockeying round for grand sweepstakes; while, from many sections better hurried with blankets, leggings, even their Indian values, to add to the common pool, were leaping at the beginning of the course would take the winner of the race. "The Yakimas are coming up-ream, somewhere towards Blue Mountains," Excellence called. Flying Hawk, that young chief entered the splendid horse, striped with crimson paint, can show you the way."

She shook her head again, slowly. "How ees it possible I ask so the chief 'bout Kam-i-ah-kan? These good tyers prairie doant lak the squaws to speak to them. But leesten, monsieur. A day I ees riding through that beeg camp. I am able to pick little Yakimas, yes, Baptiste and Leschi, who ees my Yakima mother, ees learn me; and I speak Chinook grand, for sure, lak all the Indian men. Hudson Bay Companee; but when I ask where ees those Nisquallies Leschi ees send over the river mail to the council; when I ask where ees the tepees of the Yakimas, not he ees ripe to sacré, it ees lak they doant hear me." She paused a moment, then went on with a soft vibration in her voice. "Monsieur Governor, I doant

lak to give you some tro'ble; I am sorry 'bout that, for sure; but it ees not pos'ble I find some friend in that beeg crowd, and I hear long tam how you ees leesten and help everybody, lak the curé. And I come so far to find Kam-i-ah-kan; I be'n so sure he ees going tell me where ees my white father."

Her voice broke; she drew a deep, almost sobbing breath, but her eyes never wavered from His Excellency's face. He moved a little and his glance sought the superintendent's. Then both of these men, each strong in his own way, resourceful, quick to meet emergency, looked off across those big spaces to the blue ramparts of the mountains; each confronting this other grim barrier of the frontier, and seeking some course over or around.

Finally the Governor's glance returned. "Francesca," — but meeting her look, so full of unconscious appeal, he paused. The shame, the pity of it! that this child, so intelligent, so noble, so endowed with personal charm, should come to the threshold of womanhood unclaimed, ostracized, and for no fault of her own. — "Go down to the race course," he went on, "and wait for Flying Hawk. Tell him who you are. He will listen. He will do anything for the people of Kam-i-ah-kan. Then, if you are disappointed, if the Yakima is not able to help you, come back to us, and we will do what we can."

"Yes," General Palmer drew a step nearer, "I am founding a school, a home, for — just such as you. I shall be glad to have you one of us."

"Merci." Francesca's glance rested a moment on

the General's rugged face. " So, ees it you mek a convent, monsieur? "

" Hardly, hardly, " — the superintendent smiled, — " just a plain American reservation school. But if you know something about convents you would be a great help to us. You do not look like a girl who has grown up among the Indians. "

" No, monsieur, I live since I am very small to the cabane of French Marie, and I stay some little tam to the convent by Vancouver. " She started her pony. " Good-by. Good-by, Monsieur Governor. " And she rode down from the summit of the knoll to find Flying Hawk.

As she reached the level a great outcry and the beating of many drums announced the finish of the heat. The victor swung to the farther side of his mount as he stormed past her, and snatched a gay Navajo blanket from the top of the heaped spoils. He threw it scarf-wise across one powerful bronze shoulder, then, reining in his crimson painted horse, paced slowly before the multitude, proclaiming his triumph. " I, Flying Hawk, have won the race. Out of thirty fine horses, the pick of mighty herds, my horse is the best. Like the spring chinook, swift, warm, waxing stronger he comes, and the earth melts at his passing. Like the spring cloud he carries me; I rest lightly on him. The horse and his rider are one. "

Francesca stopped near the piled goods and waited. Presently he turned, and, still vaunting his victory, paced slowly back. Then, for the first time, she saw

his face clearly and her heart leaped. Her whole slim body trembled and grew cold. He was that hunter whom she had seen, and for nearly three days eluded, at the stream in the mountains. She looked quickly about her; there was no possible hiding-place. The games were over and the crowds were beginning to disperse, but to lose herself in the multitude she must cross the race course, directly in the young chief's path. Then, suddenly, in the flush of glory, he stopped. He sat silent, motionless, regarding her. She met the look steadily, lifting her head high and with a military squaring of the shoulders.

When, after a moment, he came on slowly towards her, she addressed him, using the Chinook language current among the tribes. "I am Francesca. My mother was the sister of Kam-i-ah-kan. I have looked long for the tepees of the Yakimas, but I am not able to find them. Now, to-day, the Governor has said, 'Flying Hawk can show you the way. Tell him who you are. He will listen. He will do anything for the people of Kam-i-ah-kan.'"

Flying Hawk did not answer directly. The arrogance in his face changed while she spoke, to surprise, and as swiftly to a kind of fierce delight. She waited, watching him, still holding her head high; but her breath came a little hard and quick, and the color deepened in her cheeks, two brilliant spots.

"The Governor speaks well," he said at last. "Flying Hawk knows the camp of Kam-i-ah-kan. Far away, by the stream in the mountains, the Little Sister should have spoken, and he would have

shown her the way." His eyes burned on her another silent moment, then he went on with half-controlled fire. "I, Flying Hawk, rode homeward from the hunt. A stag had I taken and the cougar that stalked the herd. He was a great one, but I, Flying Hawk, alone killed him. With my young men I rode homeward through the wood, and lo, on a rock by the running water waited the Little Sister! Her hair was like a rain cloud at sunrise. Like the morning sun on snow mountain-tops was the Little Sister's face. Flying Hawk saw her. She filled his eyes with light. With the heat of summer his blood ran quick. At evening he returned but she was gone. Two days he looked for her, but like the young fox she moved swiftly and covered her trail."

"I was alone," Francesca answered evenly; "far, far from the Nisqually lodges; far from the Yakima tepees. I did not know the hunter. How should I know he was the friend of Kam-i-ah-kan? He did not tell me." She turned her horse and looked in the direction of the cottonwoods. "I must go that way, up the river, so the Governor said, but I see no trail."

Flying Hawk stopped to shout a command to several loitering young Indians, who fell speedily to lading some ponies with the victor's spoils, then he said, "Come, I am ready. I will show you the way."

He started his horse, past her, directly into a pathless area of blue lupine. Francesca trailed after him, and, reaching the river, they wound away up the water-course towards the encampment of the Yakimas.

VI

THE PROTECTION OF THE YAKIMA

KAM-I-AH-KAN stood outside the entrance of his tepee. His mighty frame shook with passion; his nostrils, wide and quivering like a driven moose's gathered breath. Lawyer, the head of the Nez Perces, had just left him and his final words still rankled in the great Yakima's ears. "The Bostons will come and they will stay; we cannot stop them for they are stronger, but, if we are friendly, if we divide with them, we may not lose everything."

It was not an opportune time to approach the proud chief, but it was at this moment Francesca appeared. Some idle boys and young squaws, who had followed her along the tented street, stopped at a respectful distance and waited curiously. Even Flying Hawk halted, turning his fretting, crimson painted horse a few paces back. But the girl, glad to be at her journey's end, came eagerly forward, and, throwing the end of her bridle to the ground, swung lightly down and stood before the incensed tyee.

"I am Francesca," she said. "I have come far from the land of the Nisquallies to see the brother of my dead mother, Kam-i-ah-kan the Yakima."

There was a brief silence during which the chief turned on her the searchlights of his eyes.

"Many moons ago," she continued, "when the Hudson Bay man, Baptiste, came with peltries from the camp of the Yakimas, he brought me Skookum, my little horse. For this present from Kam-i-ah-kan my heart was warm."

She paused, but Kam-i-ah-kan was still silent. Only lightnings continued to flash from under those thunder-caps, his brows. "I wished to see him," she added, "and thank him and do something for him."

Still no reply. Then, after a moment, she turned to her horse, and, taking her blanket roll, opened it and found in its folds a short mantle of otterskin, which, together with some trinkets from her basket, she laid before the tyee. "In the places by the big salt water," she said, "the squaws speak with the chiefs in council; for this reason Leschi, the great chief of all the Nisquallies, has sent these presents to Kam-i-ah-kan by me."

Then at last the great Yakima spoke; but the contempt in his tone gathered profoundness, as though in the depths of his chest his voice struck a sounding board. "You must stay long in the camp of the Yakimas to look even a little like the sister of Kam-i-ah-kan. The Yakima blood in you runs thin like water; it is lost in the blood of the cultus Boston."

It flamed in Francesca's face, two crimson spots; her breast heaved; she set her lips over a hard breath, and her hand groped for the spotted pony's neck, resting on it in a bracing grip. "Sacré, Skookum," she whispered, "sacré, he ees 'shame' my white blood."

Then the barbarian in her stirred. A flash of admiration lighted her face. Here, for the first time, she saw an Indian of whom she could be proud; an Indian who would not recognize the superiority of the white. "It rains much in the land of the Nisqually," she said, and lifted her head higher, meeting steadily the Yakima's look. "The clouds cover the sun. Mighty trees crowd together; their branches shut out the light. I have lived long in the shade, but the warm sun of the open plain will soon make me brown."

Kam-i-ah-kan made no response, but he took the otterskin and ran his palm slowly down its length. His passion smouldered low. He repeated the movement with a deliberate gentleness; then he laid the mantle aside while he gave attention to the trinkets. Among them was a miniature canoe, saved as by a miracle from destruction in the snow tunnel. It was fashioned exactly after the sea canoe of the Nisqually; cut out of a single block with crude instruments of flint or bone, hollowed by careful burning, and tapering beautifully to a high and slender prow, which bore the chief's totem, a carved and painted raven. The Yakima studied this model curiously, turning it over and over in his hands.

Francesca watched him. Finally she broke the silence. "Tyee Leschi said, 'Tell Kam-i-ah-kan all the chiefs of the salt water have met the Governor in council. At Medicine Creek gathered the Nisquallies and Puyallups and many more. Their sea canoes were as the mighty flocks of ducks that

come to the salt marshes in the rainy season, and their camp fires at night were as a burning forest. And when the great feast was finished, and the talking was over, the Governor first wrote his name on the paper and the chiefs followed. Sixty-two in all set their marks to the treaties.' "

She paused, weighing the effect of this information on the Yakima. Instantly the smouldering heat burst again into flame. He towered above her, threatening, appalling, a human storm. But she stood calmly, her arms folded, head high, meeting steadily those lightnings of his eyes. He gave back a step. His hands closed over the little canoe, crushing it like an eggshell. He hurled the fragments down.

" But," she went on, " the Governor gave to those tyees many presents; blankets and sugar and flour, and strong lines and hooks to catch the mighty fish of the deep water. And he has promised for every year, more. And, when the Great Father at Washington has put his name to the treaties, he will send men to show the old Indians and the squaws how to plant the grain, to make the fine white flour of the Boston; and they will make schools for the children so the Indians, like the Bostons, may know everything."

At this the Yakima swung lightly in his moccasins, his nostrils inhaling great breaths, and strode a few paces. Then he wheeled again swiftly and came back. " But I, Kam-i-ah-kan," and his voice thundered from the depths of his chest, " I will not be like

the cultus Boston. I will not set my name to the treaty. To-morrow I will speak. The Governor shall understand Kam-i-ah-kan is not a Willamette to give away the land of his people; or a Nisqually to sell his country."

He swung around once more with the suddenness of a whirlwind, and entered his tepee. For a moment the leather fly stirred a little and Francesca waited, expecting he would reappear. Then she was conscious that Flying Hawk had left his horse. He was at her side. She turned and faced him.

The young chief's features lightened with a swift and fiercely ardent smile. "The Little Sister has the blood of the Boston," he said. "Like the berries the squaws gather when the sun is hot by the Walla Walla, her cheeks are red. Red is her mouth. No Indian girl is like her. For this Kam-i-ah-kan does not want her; he has no place for her; but I, Flying Hawk, have long wanted a white squaw."

Francesca groped again for her pony's neck and braced herself with a steady grip, but her eyes met clearly the Indian's gaze. "A white wife cannot work like a squaw," she answered evenly. "She cannot follow the buffalo hunt to take the skin of the killed. She does not know how to scrape it and tan it and make it ready for the new tepee. When the camp moves she cannot take down the heavy poles and set them up in another place. On the march she is not able to carry a big load all day. She cannot bring fire wood on her back from the mountains. She is not strong enough. She would die."

Flying Hawk smiled again, yet more fiercely. "The Little Sister has the blood of the Boston," he repeated, "but her heart is strong. It is the heart of the great Yakima. Like the winter coat of the beaver her hair is soft and thick; her voice is the voice of many waters at the time of melting snows. She is not afraid to speak; her tongue is the tongue of a man. Like the Boston she thinks swiftly. The Little Sister need not work. Like the Boston wife she shall sit and do nothing. In Flying Hawk's new tepee shall she rest and teach him everything."

"Then first must Flying Hawk learn the Boston does not have many wives; he chooses one." Her voice vibrated and for an instant she paused, but her eyes did not waver from his, and she went quickly on. "The Boston girl does not go because a man says 'Come.' She is not bought for a horse or a blanket. She listens to her heart; she waits for it to tell her, 'This is the one man.'"

Her voice broke at the last. She lifted her hand to her throat as though the crowding words hurt; and the other palm, on Skookum's neck, trembled. But still she met the young chief's look, steadily. Then, suddenly, in this moment of her extremity, he fell back a step. His glance moved beyond her, a little higher than her head. Kam-i-ah-kan, thrusting aside the flap, stood once more before the entrance of his tepee.

"Is the Flying Hawk a Nisqually" — he paused giving an edge to the word — "that he must listen to a woman? Is he a Nez Perce to learn of a woman?"

Has he lost his horses and cattle? Has he no blankets? Is he so poor he must take a squaw for nothing?"

The young chief's eyes flamed. He began to vaunt his possessions. "Like the buffalo herds my cattle go unnumbered; uncounted my horses feed on the plain. Among the nations I, Flying Hawk, may pass and take my choice of the maids. Twelve, twenty squaws I may take, if I will; and if I give for each a horse and a blanket, yet will many blankets hang soft and warm in the lodge, and the horses not be missed from the band. Out of the nations may I, Flying Hawk, choose, but I want only this one woman. Her face is the face of the Boston, but I have seen her heart; it is the heart of the great Yakima. I do not take her for nothing. This priceless blanket," — and he flaunted the prize — "and four more as fine, I will give for the Little Sister."

He paused, but the Yakima regarded the offer with indifference. "The blankets are not common," the young chief explained. "They are not the blankets of the Hudson Bay men. They were brought by some Klickitats who rode home from the far country of the Navajos. I, Flying Hawk, won them; at the races to-day I won them."

Still Kam-i-ah-kan regarded the trophy with blighting scorn. Then, after a moment, the young chief said, "The black stallion is strong and fleet. I, Flying Hawk, riding far, far southward, rounded him out of the Spaniard's herd. He came fast with his men on the trail, but the black stallion moved quickly; by the side of my brown horse he ran; to-

gether they ran like the wind. The Spaniard could not overtake them. He turned back, on the third day he turned back, and in a green place of the mountains I rested. The black stallion is swift; him also will I give for the Little Sister."

The Yakima grew thoughtful.

Francesca watched him. She moved a step nearer. Her breast heaved. The color went from her cheeks; her lips were gray. She saw the futility of anything she could say, but her eyes spoke with an intensity of appeal. Then the spirit of her soldier father rose strong in her. She squared her shoulders; lifted her head higher; the entreaty faded from her face. She stood waiting, with contracted brows, challenging Kam-i-ah-kan to speak. It was as though, in that instant, all the power of her white intelligence focussed on his mind, dominating, controlling his thought.

"The blanket is worth much," he admitted. "It was made by the Navajos. Flying Hawk speaks well. The black stallion is a good horse; I have seen him. But it is better to wait a little. This girl must learn to work. Under the sun of the plains the Yakima in her may warm. Then she will not shame Flying Hawk; the young men will not laugh at him. Then may he speak again and Kam-i-ah-kan listen. The blanket of the Navajo is good; the black stallion is strong and swift."

There was a silent moment, then the young chief, with a last flaunting toss of the blanket, turned to his painted horse and, springing upon him, rode

away. He did not once look back, though he knew the Yakima's eyes followed him. When, presently, he disappeared among the tepees, Kam-i-ah-kan swung suddenly and flashed a glance on Francesca. "Come," he said, and flung aside the fly of his lodge once more. "Come." And he took her arm and thrust her within.

He did not enter, but he said from the doorway, "Little Beaver, listen. This is the child of Singing Bird. Take her; find the Yakima in her; make what you can of her."

Francesca found herself standing before a very old and withered squaw, who, seated on a mat, in the midst of many loose bundles of dried and stained ribbon grass, was industriously weaving a basket. The light was dim, the design intricate, but she did not use her eyes much; she seemed rather to feel than to see her work. After a moment she paused, listening, while Kam-i-ah-kan strode from the tepee. His moccasined feet trod almost noiselessly, but it was as though she heard the earth resound at his passing. Then she raised her dull glance to the child of Singing Bird. She did not say anything, and presently resumed her weaving. The interruption apparently had confused her, for her hands wavered over the basket, and, reaching for a new strand, she selected one from the purple bunch instead of the blue, which was the color needed to complete the woven figure.

Francesca thought swiftly. She saw the insecurity of her refuge; that it was impossible now to speak to

Kam-i-ah-kan directly of her mission. To ask him to tell her what he knew about her father and let her go, would surely precipitate the catastrophe. He meant, sooner or later, to give her to Flying Hawk. The Yakimas were encamped on the ground of the Walla Wallas, with whom he was a favorite tyee. They were allies, friends. Besides, what Flying Hawk wanted was he not able to take? Had he not picked the horse he desired from the herd of the Spaniard? So, surely, when the moment came, he would have her, unless — Her eyes rested on this indifferent, almost sightless old squaw, to whom she was to serve a brief, uncertain apprenticeship. Who was she? Was there possible help in her?

Francesca sank down beside her and, drawing the purple strand from her fingers, silently substituted the right color. For a long time the old woman worked industriously, and she waited, watching the weave which was very different from the Nasqually. Finally she chose a few ribbons of the green and began to try it. Little Beaver paused again, and, leaning forward, peered closely at her. Then she dropped the basket and took the girl's head between her palms. She felt her face slowly; the texture of her hair; and its length and weight. At last the old hands fell to her shoulders with an impatient, rocking push.

"Kam-i-ah-kan said the truth." She intoned the words deliberately, yet with a certain vehemence; and, taking up her work, pulled the strands in place with unnecessary force. "The child of Singing

Bird is not a Yakima. The blood of the Yakimas in her runs thin; she shows the worthless mixed blood."

There was a long silence. Little Beaver's hand flew like a shuttle and Francesca's fingers laboriously threaded the strands. Then the old squaw lifted her voice again, less angrily but with wonderful depth of expression. "Singing Bird rested under the trees. After the heat of the day by the running waters she rested. The White Wolf came hunting. Many times he came seeking, seeking Singing Bird. He talked with her father, the head chief Red Wing. Together they smoked the pipe. Priceless presents the White Wolf brought to Red Wing and took her away. Over the country of the Nez Perces he took her, far, far through the mountains, where the waters of the Snake grow small, down into the country of the Blackfeet. There he left her. He promised to come again. Long Singing Bird waited, but a Boston does not keep his word. The Blackfeet squaws took her horse; they took her good blankets; all day she carried wood and water for them. They did not like her; they made her afraid. She ran away. Through the mountains she came seeking the lodges of the Yakimas; but her feet were heavy; heavy was the snow. She died by the trail."

Little Beaver's work rested in her lap. She folded her arms and began to rock herself slowly. "Ah-de-dah!" she lamented. "Ah-de-dah!" (Alas! Alas!)

"I know," Francesca said gently. "I was there with her; and the good Black Robe found me.

He took me in his arms and rode back to the Coeur D'Alene village. A French woman took care of me, and soon, when she went with the Hudson Bay man, who was her husband, on the long trail to the land of the Nisquallies, the Black Robe gave me to her."

She paused, watching the old squaw in uncertainty. She had used the Chinook while Little Beaver had spoken the pure Yakima. And she did not seem to have heard. "Ah-de-dah!" she repeated and continued to rock herself slowly, "Ah-de-dah!"

"Little Beaver, listen." Francesca shaped the words deliberately, this time using the less familiar Yakima. "My father was a soldier. He must go when he was called. He must ride far and fast. He must fight in battle. He could not take a woman with him. But he came back; he came — if he said he would come. It was too late; she had gone. There was no one to tell him about me." Her voice broke; her fingers closed over her work, hopelessly tangling the strands. She crushed it down in her lap. "You, the Indians, called him the White Wolf," she went on. "What was his Boston name? Think, Little Beaver. Do you know it? Tell me his Boston name."

A breeze set the tepee flap swinging and a fragrance of burning wood filtered in. The cooking fires were being kindled. A young woman came in and, finding a large iron kettle, started out. At the entrance she paused and looked back, curiously, at the girl beside the sorrowing old squaw.

Francesca put down her emotion. She met the

look steadily. "She has been talking about Singing Bird. Is she her mother? The mother of Kam-i-ah-kan?"

"No. She is the mother of the old chief, Red Wing, who is dead."

"Ah-de-dah! Ah-de-dah!" Little Beaver went on lamenting, but when the young squaw had gone she rose and began to tie the loose bundles of grass.

VII

THE WISDOM OF THE SERPENT

EARLY the following morning, for the first time, Kam-i-ah-kan rode to the council. And, when the pipe had been passed, and the Governor had opened the session, the great Yakima rose and, waiving the interpreter, made an eloquent and impassioned appeal directly to the Indians. But the majority of the young chiefs influenced so long by the Nez Percés, and lured by rich presents and promises of annuities, were in favor of the treaties. It became a stormy congress.

That evening no one dared approach Kam-i-ah-kan. He was as a stalking pestilence in the camp. But, at the close of the next day, his old ally Yellow Serpent, the head of the Walla Wallas, sought him. "What is this treaty?" he asked. "It is only a piece of paper. A puff of wind, some water, a little fire and it is gone. If the young men wish to write on it why need we oppose them? Washington is far away. Many moons must pass before these annuities can come. They will grow impatient. They will say the Bostons do not keep their word. The young chiefs will be filled with anger and shame. Then they will listen to us. They will be ready to follow us. They will do anything."

In the end, the day of the final session, Kam-i-ah-kan rode once more, in company with Yellow Serpent, to the council. He listened in glooming silence while the treaties were read. He saw that the most of their country was reserved to the friendly Nez Perces, and that the best of the Yakima country was promised to his own people. He heard that, "as long as the sun shines and the rains water the earth" these lands should not be taken from the Indians. After that he watched the tyees, one by one, set their marks by their written names on the papers. He, himself, refused steadily all personal gifts, but when, at last, Flying Hawk, followed by Yellow Serpent, went forward and signed, the great Yakima rose and strode to the secretary's table, and seizing the pen, slashed on the treaty his broad and heavy cross.

Later, while the two chiefs rode slowly along the banks of the Walla Walla, Kam-i-ah-kan said, "Now will the Governor go away. In a little while he will go home to his people by the salt water. Many Bostons live by the big salt water. They are not afraid of the poor Nisquallies. They think they are safe. They will not keep their word. They believe we cannot cross the mountains in winter; but," — and he flashed suddenly on Yellow Serpent the lightnings of his eyes, — "when the snow is packed hard in the Pass, and the ice is strong under our horses, we may surprise them."

VIII

THE GARDEN OF PÈRE LA FRAMBOISE

PÈRE LA FRAMBOISE stood on a bench under the trellis at the end of the mission gallery, fastening the new trailers of his favorite red rose. Behind him the garden was brilliant with blooming Jacqueminots. Presently he paused and, dropping his arms a resting moment, turned to look at the Nisqually whom he had laboriously initiated into the mysteries of floral culture. *Ciel*, but the fellow was of a slowness, and the earth, moist still from the prolonged chinook rains, sent forth weeds apace. It was certain he never would be able to accomplish, with these indifferent canoe Indians, what he had done on the other side of the Cascade Mountains with the Coeur D'Alenes.

A puff of cool, salt wind fanned the curé's heated face, and his glance moved beyond the plodding Nisqually, down along the path, which, making a curve around a giant cedar, dipped abruptly from the garden through an alder thicket to the hidden shore. Above this bluff a bit of the shimmering Sound hung, framed in forest, like a painted marine view. Another stronger gust fluted the blue water, and, drawing over the treetops, lifted a fold of his gown against the thorns, pinning him fast to the climbing

rose. He stooped with difficulty and, extricating the skirt, tucked it up out of the way. It divided and ballooned below the cord at his ample waist, suggesting trunks; but the droll effect was lost on the stupid Nisqually, and there was no one else to see.

Unhampered the curé turned with the ease and grace of a heavy man in training, and reached for the highest trailer, which the breeze alternately dipped and tauntingly lifted out of his grasp. Finally he secured it and tacked it to the top slat of the lattice; and, for a while, the trip, trap of his hammer, like the knock of a woodpecker, rose above the subdued voices of the garden. Then suddenly, between strokes he caught a different note; the clinking of metal upon stone. He paused, breathing deeply, and sent another glance over his shoulder at the Nisqually; but the sound repeated, came from the opposite direction, where the path, skirting the building, ran through an infant orchard to meet the public trail. Some one was approaching. He heard now the tramp of a horse.

The next moment, while he struggled with the knotted cord that held the fold of his cassock, the intruder rounded the end of the gallery and drew his rein. He rode a big gray charger and wore the uniform of the United States Army. He was a man of distinguished presence, in his first prime; muscular, with breadth of shoulder, strength of chin, and a swift, direct look that appraised a man, or a situation, on sight. Seeing the priest his firm

lips hinted a smile. "Good-afternoon, Father La Framboise," he said with grave courtesy, "I congratulate myself on finding you at home."

The curé bent his head, and, having at last freed his skirt, stepped down from the bench. "I have the honare to address Monsieur le Commandant of the new American garrison near Fort Nisqually," he answered with great dignity and folded his arms. "Monsieur will do me the pleasure to deesmount."

He stood in this way, with his arms folded, while the officer swung out of the saddle and tied his horse. Even when he came up the steps the priest did not offer his hand, but motioned his visitor to a seat in the gallery. But the Commandant did not marvel at being coolly received. The new garrison, as all the world knew, was on lately disputed territory; and these Jesuits were the open partisans of the Hudson Bay Company. They had, themselves, tremendous schemes of converting the Northwest hordes and securing the whole vast country to the dominion of Rome. He took the seat and, removing his hat, looked off to the bit of the blue Sound, which was set like a picture in a frame of the forest. Along the line of the hatband his hair, a light chestnut, roughened in damp rings.

The curé stepped through the open door and returned presently, with a jug and a loaf made of unbolted flour, which he placed on a small table beside the officer. "The wine ees new," he said taking the opposite seat. "It ees what you call experiment, made of the wild Oregon grape. I fear the vintage

ees but indiffrent; but it should improve — ees it not so, monsieur? — in a year or two it should be of some flavor."

The Commandant raised the cup which the priest had filled for him, and drank sparingly. "No doubt," he answered, keeping admirable control of his features though he set the cup down with undue force, "no doubt. The flavor is marked now. It is certainly a vintage to make your name famous."

The curé, who had poured a thimbleful of the wine into his own cup, followed the draught hastily with a generous fragment of bread, which he held in readiness. The Commandant watched him and his mouth again hinted a smile. "But your name is a power already, Father La Framboise," he added seriously. "You are known all over the Northwest. Your remarkable influence with the Indians has made you an authority in the settlements."

The curé allowed the tribute to pass. The salt wind, cool and pleasant, was in his face and he looked off in silence to the shining sea. A canoe moved into the picture and with swift flashing paddles, and a furrow widening from her keel, passed behind the rim of the bluff which was the lower edge of the frame. On the great stillness the last fragment of a song drifted faintly,

"En — roulant — ma — bou-le."

He leaned forward a little, listening. "That ees Baptiste Lamont," he said after a moment. "He ees collect some cargo of peltries by Olympia, and

it ees pos'ble one, two passenger ride down to the Post with him."

"My wife and daughter are visiting the Governor's family. They went up to Olympia on the Decatur last week with the intention of coming back with me. My sergeant, Walters, rode on with their horses when I stopped for a brief talk with you. I expect to meet my superior officer, General Wool, who is on a tour of inspection from San Francisco, and I would like very much to know what you think of these treaties. Do you consider them premature? Or will the Indians keep faith with us?"

Père La Framboise continued to look at the shimmering sea. "I think, monsieur, the Indians are able to keep what you call faith, so long they are convince' you will do what you have promise'."

"But," said the Commandant, and flashed a glance on the curé, "if some one persuades them we do not mean to keep our word?"

The curé shrugged his shoulders. "Then, monsieur, you who have live' so long tam on the frontier ees have the intelligence to on'stand the inevitable."

There was a brief silence during which both men watched the marine picture, then, "You are a good man Father La Framboise," said the soldier. "I appreciate what you have done. Your work among the fierce tribes of Eastern Washington paved the way for our immigrants. If you and your voyageurs had not come first, these settlers never would have been allowed to pass unmolested down to the valley of the Willamette. You taught the Indians to listen;

your priests interpreted the treaties to fit their intelligence, or else Governor Stevens's councils must have terminated differently. Your influence is incalculable, Father La Framboise; I trust, if the time comes, in the cause of humanity you will do what you can."

He rose to his feet and stood looking down at the priest with slightly knitted brows. But the curé continued to study the marine view. "Humanity," he repeated after a moment. "Humanity. It ees what you call a broad word, monsieur; ees it not so? It covers both sides. But your people forgot it before the treaties were cold. Only last week they forgot it at Butler's Cove."

The furrow deepened between the Commandant's brows. "You are right. It was an atrocious folly; without excuse. Those two settlers waylaid that canoe, and shot those Indians in cold blood from the shore. It was premeditated, a planned ambush, because some friends of theirs chanced to be murdered by members of another tribe a while before. This is one of the things I wished to speak to you about. A lighter outrage has been enough, sometimes, to precipitate an Indian war; and I want the Nisquallies to know I shall urge the arrest of those men and a just trial; restitution to the family of each Indian killed."

The curé shook his head. "Monsieur, that ees not pos'ble. Your white jury will nevere — what ees it you say? Convic'? Yes, convic' a man who ees only take the life of an Indian. But you are safe,

Monsieur le Commandant; you are safe. On the other side those Monts du Cascade it ees diffrent; but here, bah, these poor Nisquallies have no heart. They are but sheep."

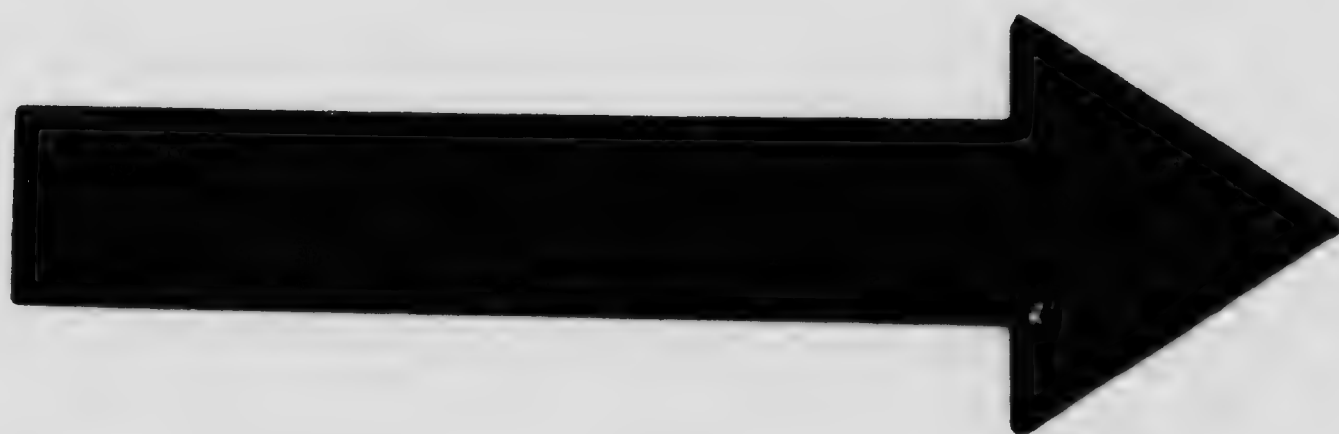
His glance sought the neophyte, wrestling still with the hoe, then, looking farther, he rose to his feet. At the same instant the Commandant discovered his daughter and went down the steps to meet her.

Lucia, who had raced up the steep bank from the shore, paused under the cedar at the curve in the path to reconnoitre, seeking adventure or at least diversion in this strange place. Seeing her father she came quickly on into the garden. "Oh," she cried impetuously, "you missed the messenger. General Wool decided not to make the trip. He is taking the ship back from the Columbia to San Francisco to-day. Word was sent you and, to save you the trouble of coming to Olympia for us, we started home by canoe."

She stopped before him, gathering breath; the pink of coral flushing her face, and sent a sparkling glance up over her father's shoulder at the priest.

"General Wool has returned to San Francisco?" said the officer slowly. "He decided not to visit Olympia and the garrison?"

"Yes, the messenger has his dispatches. Of course to miss this sailing meant weeks of delay; and I don't blame him for avoiding that voyage down the Columbia and up the Cowlitz. It's miserably tiresome sitting all day in a canoe; one cramps,



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aches until to move makes one ready to scream. But we might easily have escaped it to-day, for Billy Haworth was coming down to the Post, and he offered me Barnabee, while mother might have had his easiest packhorse. But she would not." Lucia pursed her lips. "She would hardly allow Baptiste to turn the canoe in to the landing long enough for us to climb the bluff and see the mission roses."

The Commandant covered his chagrin, and, setting his lips, looked down the path. "Your mother must find it a sharp climb," he said; "I must hurry to help her. And I will tell Baptiste not to hold the canoe for you. Walters went on with the horses, but he was to wait for me at the ford a mile up the trail, and I will bring him back."

Lucia stood watching him while he walked quickly towards the curve, then turned and, with another sparkling glance at the curé, dropped her lashes demurely. "Father has forgotten the introduction," she said, "but I suppose you are Père La Framboise."

"Yes, mademoiselle; and I, myself, have the honare to address the daughter of Monsieur le Commandant. I must be convince' even if I saw you alone."

"Yes?" Lucia came up the step and took one of the seats near the table. "I am told I greatly resemble my father when he was a boy. But how would you have known me?"

"In these forests young ladies come not so plen-



" 'I suppose you are Père La Framboise.' "

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tiful; when one passes there ees some stir. I have heard of you, mademoiselle. This side the Mississippi, so have I heard, there ees not one like the daughter of Monsieur le Commandant." And he added gravely, "I, myself, do not remember one like you in Montreal or even Quebec."

"But in France, Father La Framboise" — she gave him a swift side glance — "In la belle France, when you were young?"

"In France —" the curé looked off through the garden. "In France, Mademoiselle; that is a tam long forgotten."

The merriment dimpled Lucia's mouth. She, too, looked down through the garden. "I have heard of your roses," she said presently. "The Governor's nephew wanted to bring me to see them. But there was the ball on board the Decatur, and the party for the officers, and so many diversions we never found time to ride this way. But even before that I knew of you, Père La Framboise, and Billy Hawthorn promised to show me this garden. He called it Francesca's school-room."

The curé's look returned to Lucia's face. "So," he said slowly. "So, the boy told you about Francesca. He was her playmate."

"Oh, yes, he told me about her. I should know her whole history by now." Lucia shrugged her shoulders with a swift uplift of her level brows. "And I have seen her. I own, for a half-Indian girl, she's rather pretty, but it's unaccountable how she turns all the men's heads. Even Baptiste, that

amiable, slow Baptiste" — the merriment rose again, lurking at the corners of her mouth — "was afire in an instant, because a loungee at the landing, this morning, teased him about her. He sprang out of the canoe with his big hands clenched, and towered over the fellow in a fury. 'Pierre Bouchard,' he said, 'it ees bes' you doan' spik 'bout Francesca. Sacré, it ees mooch bes' you tek dat back, dem quick.'"

She imitated the voyageur's patois capitally, and the profanity was lost straightway in the laugh that bubbled from her lips. But the curé did not smile. "Baptiste did well," he said. "The child ees much too good, too fine for such canaille to spik of her. But what did Bouchard?"

"Why, he took it all back instantly, as he must, and melted away into the crowd. Not one dared to stir until Baptiste had returned to his place in the canoe and pushed off. Then, as we caught the tide and swung down mid-channel, everybody laughed and sent after us a great cheer."

She herself laughed again, tipping back her head in a buoyant, rippling peal; but Père La Framboise only looked off in silence through the garden. Suddenly she sprang up and ran down to her father's horse. The curé turned and watched her in astonishment. The hitching-strap was loose; the bridle in her hand. Another instant and her foot was in the stirrup; she was up. She bent to fix the foot higher in the strap above the buckle, then, "I am going for Walters," she called, and waving her hand to the priest, was off.

Père La Framboise shook his head, and, lifting his palms with an outward gesture that said plainly, "The ways of a woman are past finding out," looked off again through the garden. The Commandant was returning, and the curé's glance finally rested on the lady who walked with him up between the rows of nodding Jacqueminot.

He told himself that she had the carriage of a lady abbess, but she was a woman to hold any glance. One of the few women who carry the slenderness and enthusiasm of youth over the threshold of middle age, with an added fineness and charm. A woman of strong feeling, yet able to control her emotions. In short a woman to draw the regard of all good and brave men, and one whom, loving, such a man allows to dominate his life.

Her lingering look moved over the rose beds as she came, and her eyes, not blue like Lucia', but a warm, deep gray, lighted with pleasure. She drew in slow breaths enjoying the fragrance, and once she paused to bury her lips in the heart of a velvet bloom. When she lifted her eyes the light in them seemed to touch her whole face. It was then the priest told himself that she had the soul of a saint.

Presently, when she had taken the seat Lucia had left, the curé explained the girl's absence. The Commandant, disturbed, walked to the end of the gallery. The charger had a hard mouth; still, she was a good horsewoman and fearless. And, after all, the animal would stop when he overtook the other horses, and Walters knew how to manage him.

The old sergeant would see that she returned on her own mount. He came back to his wife.

"Did you see the spring?" she asked, and added, turning to the priest with a smile, "Baptiste told us there was a cool, bubbling spring up here, in a clean, rocky basin."

"There ees, m'ne; you will see it as you go out to the long sail. But you shall have a drink from it now, at once. I am gone but a moment."

When he had disappeared through the open door she turned again to the Commandant with the soft light in her eyes. "It is like coming on a bit of old France, here in the wilderness. Only — mon père isn't young."

The Commandant stood for a moment looking down at her. "So," he said. "So you knew a place like this in France."

"Yes. Surely I must have told you, but you have forgotten. It was, of course, when I made that little tour with my mother along the Mediterranean. On the way back to Paris we stopped to rest at a lovely place up in the hills. There was a monastery. I knew nothing about friars and novitiates and vows, but the high wall around the grounds instantly seemed to enclose a splendid mystery. You see I was very young and imaginative, and like Lucia, always seeking romance or adventure. At last, one day, returning from a small exploring trip I found, in passing, the wicket had been left ajar. The garden was beautiful. I never had seen anything like it; nothing as quaint; never so many flowers.

It covered a great deal of ground; shadowy walks stretched everywhere. They lured me in. I went on and on. I met no one until, finally, in a charming arbor at the heart of a great tract of Jacqueminot, I stumbled on a young priest. At sight of me he dropped the book he was reading and got to his feet. He stood frowning while I tried to explain, in my poor boarding school French, how I came there; then he told me I should have known women were barred from the place. I was frightened and ashamed. I started to go, but there were so many paths I chose the wrong one. He was obliged to show me the way. I hurried faster and faster, but at last I tripped on a trailing vine and fell. He was forced to help me up, and after that he must have felt a little sorry for me, for he began to cut the choicest roses, and before we reached the wicket, my arms were heaped with them; red ones, fragrant like these."

There was a brief silence. She lifted her glance from the garden, letting it rest a moment on the framed bit of shining sea. But the Commandant, watching her face, laughed. "I'll wager you gave the poor fellow a hard time. I can see him now, piling those roses in your arms, delaying you and himself against reason, and, afterwards, paying the penalty with all the rigor of old St. Anthony."

She met the officer's look and a soft flush crept over her face. "He wasn't a weak man," she said. "Indeed he seemed more a soldier than a priest; strong, capable, full of enthusiasm for his work. He almost made a Romanist of me."

Behind her the curé moved from the doorway to the table and set down the pitcher which he had filled at the spring; but he did it clumsily, for it clinked on the stone jug and the water splashed over.

"I see," said the Commandant, still amused, "you met him again."

"Yes, we found him aboard the vessel, two months later, when we sailed for America. He was going in company with several fathers to the missions in the neighborhood of Montreal." She turned and looked up at Père La Framboise and smiled. "Did you ever happen to know a Brother Ramon?" she asked.

He did not answer directly. He lifted the pitcher and filled slowly, with care, a glass for her; but his hand was unsteady and the water splashed over again. "Yes, madame, I knew a Brother Ramon; but the name ees of a commonness in France. That Ramon I spik of" — He put the pitcher down and drew himself erect; his voice rose almost in arraignment. "That Ramon — failed — in the three vows."

There was another silence. The lady lifted the glass and slowly drank the cool draught. Then she said, "The Brother Ramon of whom I'm speaking would have done his work well; wherever he went he must have made himself felt; of this I am sure. But, after all, how should you know of him, Father La Framboise? He probably remained at some mission near Montreal, but that is another world to you who have spent the best of your life here in the

Pacific Northwest. You see," she added smiling, "I have heard of you; your fame has spread. I know about your splendid work among the Coeur D'Alenes; you have made of them a fine people. If you accomplish half as much with these indifferent Nisquallies it will be next to a miracle."

The curé stepped inside the door and brought a white loaf and the half of a grouse — which he had reserved from yesterday's supper for to-day's luncheon — and placed them on the table beside her. "Try the bird, madame," he said and went around to the opposite chair, "it ees of a flavor." And after a moment he resumed, "The time of the miracle I fear ees past; still I do not deespair. But leesten. I look to establish the convent in this diocese of Nisqually. Yes, madame, the convent. The Sisters ees going be able do more for these patien' people than the curé; and particularly with the half-caste."

"The half-caste?" She looked at the priest, lifting her chin a little and ruffling her brows. "I should think, inheriting the vices of their depraved white fathers, as they do, they must prove even more hopeless than the miserable Nisquallies."

"Some of them, madame, some, not all, have the deprave' father."

"Oh, mon père, I am skeptical. I have lived too much on the frontier to believe any good can come of a half-blood. Surely you know he inherits all the wickedness of the Indian together with the evil of his disreputable white father. We trace to him more than half the mischief, crime, outrage of the

settlements. Often he is the instigator of our Indian wars. He is at once the most vindictive, the most repulsive and the most miserable of the lost."

The Commandant drew his hand across his eyes and went down the steps. There he paused to look back. "I warn you, Father La Framboise," he said; "this is the one point it is useless to discuss with my wife. Her judgment is fixed."

"Madame," said the curé, "you should know Francesca."

"Francesca," repeated the lady slowly. "I have heard of her. She is said to be a handsome girl and unusually intelligent; and I understand she is a protégé of yours. You have taken great pains with her. It was you, doubtless, who gave her that unusual name."

The Commandant, who had started on around the gallery to watch for Lucia, stopped again. He did not look back but stood, listening for the priest's answer, with his hand braced lightly on the wall and his face turned to the sea.

"At her baptism, madame, yes," said the curé. "It was a name her father gave to her mother. Lamont, Baptiste's father, heard it of a voyageur who had seen her among the Blackfeet. But, madame, you should see the child. She ees of a diffrunce. You should talk with her. She has the gift of language. She ees able converse in the pure French I have taught her. Her accent ees not to reproach. And she ees able read all my books, madame; not one ees escape. And some little mathematics I explain

for her she ees construct with skill. Oh, but she ees of a swiftness you may beli've. Her memory, her gift of words meks it pos'ble for any Indian to on'-stand her. She ees going have gre't influence over them some day. She has the warm heart. Madame, she ees of the incredible. I spik but the truth."

The curé's deep voice had taken a softer note, a gentle enthusiasm beamed in his eyes. He leaned forward a little, watching the lady's countenance, while he waited for her reply.

The Commandant also waited. He turned a little and raised his glance to his wife's face. The light had gone out. She looked off above him to the still marine view. Her profile was beautiful, but in that moment it was as unresponsive, cold, clear-cut, as a faultless cameo.

The distant neigh of a horse broke the stillness. The officer walked on around the end of the gallery. Père La Framboise got to his feet. After a moment he went down into the garden and began to cut his choicest, darkest, long-stemmed Jacqueminots.

The neigh was repeated as the officer went up the path, and suddenly, where it met the long forest trail, two riders galloped past. Lucia's gay laugh rippled back to him, and for another instant, through a break in the trees, he saw her slim figure moving in perfect unison with her bay mount. She had found Walters, then, and had exchanged the gray charger for her own horse. And it was not the stout sergeant who set the pace, but young Haworth, whose at-

tendance her mother had set aside for the cramped passage in Baptiste's canoe.

Presently, as the Commandant came to the end of the mission path, the young man's pack horses clattered past, then the neigh rang out again and Walters rounded a curve, reining in Trumpeter with difficulty, and quieting the excited charger. The officer took the other led horse from the sergeant and went quickly back to the mission building for his wife.

She had risen from her seat in the gallery, and, as the Commandant approached, she looked down at him over the red roses which Père La Framboise had heaped in her arms. She inhaled their fragrance with long soft breaths; her cheek touched the velvet petals in a lingering caress. The light had returned to her eyes; it illumined her whole face.

IX

HAWORTH'S POOL

AT the end of June the days are long in the Puget Sound country. The sun swings almost an elliptic course, setting far in the Northwest. It was then, one mid-afternoon, Lucia lured the Lieutenant trout-fishing, down the creek which, below the garrison, cut its way out to the harbor through a deep and wooded gorge.

The trail was little more than a blazed track. It narrowed between great fir boles, doubled armlike cedar trunks, dipped abruptly in crumbling stairs. Finally, in such a place, the young officer turned to help her.

"Wait," she said, "let me pass you. I want to show you Billy Haworth's pool; and the branch is there, the merest thread of way. A sailor could never find it."

She stepped quickly down. Her shoulder touched him. She gave him a swift upward side glance from under her long lashes, and paused for an instant, allowing her hand to rest in his. High lights, sifting between the branches, brought out the warm tones of her hair; a moisture like a transparency softened the coral pink of her face; her breast rose and fell with hurried, deep breaths. Yet she kept her poise and

her elusiveness, like some sprite. He loved her, his arms trembled to possess her, but — the Lieutenant kept his head.

"You are right, Miss Lucia," and he answered the glance with a smile, "a sailor must have his star." And he released the hand and pressed back a step to give her the path.

Lucia laughed. "Come, then."

She moved on, dipping under the trailing bough of a hemlock, and, presently, when she had reached the levels of the creek bed, her voice came back to him gayly, innocently, in a thread of song.

"Oh, how delightful, oh, how entrancing,
Out of this thralldom soon to be free—e."

There she stumbled on a root and her notes tripped, but after a moment she went on as merrily with the next measure and so led him the rest of the way.

It was a charming place. A few yards upstream a rock pushed like a promontory into the current, which expostulated ceaselessly; spent itself in passion-bursts of spray; but, once around the barrier, the channel dropped gently to a limpid green pool. A soft wind drew down the watercourse and myriads of ferns nodded their dripping plumes. Glossy tangles of salal shook their clusters of white and pink bells, and the wild pea fluttered small ragged flags of cerise and lavender-blue. Lucia seated herself upon a log under a flowering dogwood, while the Lieutenant went out on the rock to cast a fly. Sometimes she swept him with her side glance, but oftener she

studied the pool. It was as clear as crystal, yet it stirred continually, rippled, sparkled, welled over.

Suddenly she started up. "Wait, wait," she cried softly. "Now, now, no, wait. Oh, you clumsy marine," she added in a higher key. "Did you think you had hooked a halibut? Or were you harpooning a whale?"

The Lieutenant laughed, flushing a little, and shook his head. "But I'm learning, Miss Lucia. I'm learning. You'll admit I all but had that fellow. I swear he simply tore himself free."

"Yes, he was on the hook," said Lucia pursing her lips. "A splendid rainbow. And it needed but the slightest, nicest twist to land him, and you lunged, pounding like a hundred of brick to the bottom of the pool."

She went back to her seat under the dogwood and, turning her shoulder to the young officer, looked off coolly down stream. He began awkwardly to reel in his line. Finally he came along the bank and stood looking down at her. "It's too bad, Miss Lucia. I'm sorry. And I won't bore you with any more deep sea manoeuvres, to-day."

"It wouldn't be of any use to try. There isn't a fish left in the pool." She sent a glance over her shoulder to be sure. "I doubt if even Billy Haworth could coax one back."

The Lieutenant seated himself on the moss near her, leaning his arm easily on the end of the log. "So," he said slowly. "So, young Haworth can fish too."

"Fish? The trout love his fly. They seem to know when he is here. He's like the pied piper. They come from upstream and down. Everywhere. The pool is alive. I wish you could see him, there on the rock." She moved a little to look at the promontory, and unconsciously gave the Lieutenant her profile. The coolness had dropped from her face; a soft enthusiasm sparkled in her eyes. "It's the most exhilarating sight. Your blood tingles; you dance, you laugh, you don't know what you're going to do. And he just stands there, and whips, whips, lightly, gently" — her voice fell to an undertone — "and almost every time there's a speckled beauty to show."

"I see, Miss Lucia. That's why you call it Hawthorth's pool."

"It's his by right of discovery. I'm the only one he ever brought here, and it was there, on that rock, he taught me to cast."

"I see," repeated the Lieutenant, "I see; and of course you think it was a rash impulse that led you to bring me here. I've spoiled the record of the pool. But I'll restore it, Miss Lucia, yes, I will. If it's possible to lure those fish back I'll do it to-day. To-morrow — we sail for San Francisco."

"For San Francisco?" She turned startled, and met his look with the sudden, direct flash of her wide open eyes. "You are going to sail — to stay — indefinitely away?"

He did not answer directly. He was trying to determine how much personality he could give the

feeling she betrayed. There were other officers on board the ship. She loved gayety and the life of the garrison would be quieter when the cruiser had gone. "Yes," he said finally, "we are sailing under orders to California for supplies." He paused but Lucia was silent. She turned her face, looking off again, down-stream. "But Puget Sound will not be left long without a patrol," he went on. "The boundary question alone warrants at least one cruiser in these waters. And these Nisquallies are growing discontented, already, about the treaties. They have been listening to emissaries, probably, from that old viper Kam-ich-kan, who keeps stirring things east of the mountains. When the situation is understood at headquarters it is possible the Decatur will be sent back. If she has other orders I shall do my best to be transferred to the ship that does come. If I fail," — he leaned forward a little, trying to see her face. — "If I fail, Miss Lucia —"

"Why, then," she said lightly, "I hope you'll remember to send me an order on Fort Nisqually, for those two silver fox peltries."

"If I fail I shall secure leave in time to come back for — El Capitan."

Lucia laughed. She rose and went over to the tr against which the Lieutenant had set the fishing-rod. "A sailor," she said softly, "a sailor, so I have heard, has a — love — in every port."

The officer was on his feet. She turned, with the rod in her hands, and the amusement still dimpled

her lips. It was that smile, half mocking, as though she read a man through, sifted his weakness, laughed at it, that always baffled the Lieutenant. He stopped, leaving the space between them, and the color heightened in his face.

"Besides," she went on, and dropped her glance demurely, "El Capitan has grown too valuable. He has beaten his record. He comes now a close second to Barnabee. Oh, but you should have seen us." She looked up and off through the trees, beyond the Lieutenant, and the fun danced in her eyes. "It was the day we came from Olympia. Once, when we were out of the forest and skimming the open plain, it was neck and neck. And father and mother" — the merriment bubbled in soft trills between the words — "following twenty minutes late, while old Walters came jogging in with Billy's packhorses, a full hour behind."

The young officer laughed from sheer sympathy. "But, Miss Lucia, I thought you came home by canoe. You remember I saw you off."

"We started, true; but we stopped at the mission to rest, and father was there on his way by trail to Olympia. He had missed the messenger. Walters had gone on to the creek with our horses, and so I took the charger and rode to call him back. And, it was the merest good fortune, of course, but I found Billy Haworth halting, too, at the ford. I was off father's horse in a moment and mounting El Capitan; then we skimmed down past the mission at a gallop and — gave them the slip

—with father—standing in amazement at the branch.”

Her shoulders shook; her red lips parted, and, tipping back her head, she watched the Lieutenant between half-closed lids, while her laugh, starting an echo, rippled through the gorge. “It was worth,” she went on with subdued trills, “it was worth the inevitable lecture; though mother—mother—got on her highest pedestal—a-tiptoe. And it was ‘Lucia, I am surprised. To think that you, my daughter, could so far forget yourself. Where is your pride—your self-respect? Lucia, Lucia, what are you coming to?’”

The Lieutenant was forced to laugh again; It was not to be helped; the girl was so delightful. “But,” he said after a moment, “you are a good housewoman; and decorous, I grant that, when the time comes. Why should your mother be worried?”

“Why, first because I hadn’t waited for my riding-habit, which was in the bag an Indian had gone to bring up from the canoe. And next because, after all, I had had my way about Billy Haworth. She had tried her best at Olympia to avoid him.”

“Yes? What had she against young Haworth?”

“Don’t you know?” Lucia’s glance fell to the fishing-rod in her hands. She began to reel in slowly, a slack in the line. “It’s that girl, Francesca.”

“Francesca? You mean that handsome, Spanish-looking girl we saw one morning near the trading post.”

Lucia ruffled her brows. “I mean that half-blood

girl we passed, the day Trumpeter left you unhorsed and went back to the stables. But it's this way. Billy has always known her. They played together when they were children. No one objected then, but now, suddenly, he finds himself censured, lectured, constantly watched. He must not even stop to speak to her if he meets her on the trail. His father, the Colonel, finally asked the Governor's wife to remonstrate with him, and she took the opportunity the last time he passed through Olympia. Billy listened very politely to all she had to say, but when she ended by advising him to have nothing more to do with Francesca, he answered that he was very sorry to disagree with a lady, but she should understand Francesca had very few friends and it must hurt her much more to be cast off, like that, for no fault of hers, by an old comrade, than it could possibly benefit him to gain the good opinion of a lot of new people, who never could understand the situation, and if they could would never trouble to help or speak to her."

"I see," said the Lieutenant, gravely, "I see. And when the Governor's wife repeated this to your mother she, of course —"

"Lectured me." Lucia ruffled her brows again, with a swift little shrug of her shoulders. "She said the daughter of a United States officer was hardly one to share favors with a half-Indian girl."

"And then, Miss Lucia, what had you to say?"

"Why, I said it was foolish of Billy to answer Mrs. Stevens in that way, since Francesca had gone

over the mountains to her Yakima uncle long ago, and was probably settled there, married perhaps to some fine young chief; but, after all I hardly blamed him; he was nettled, impatient to be let alone. And, if it came to a question of favors, Billy Haworth was the most interesting, entertaining, nicest boy in a hundred miles."

Lucia finished with a swift side glance at the Lieutenant and dropped her eyes to the stream. "Oh," she cried with a sudden flutter of excitement, "the fish are coming back. Here, take the rod. Wait — the fly is tangled. Now — be careful — see what you can do to save the honor of the pool."

X

THE BANKS OF THE YAKIMA

AFTER the great council Kam-i-ah-kan spent little time at his village near the mouth of the Yakima. He rode often with a picked band of hunters far afield, but, though his stay extended over days, even to weeks, he seldom brought home anything. Meat was supplied the lodges by other parties. Sometimes Flying Hawk returned with him. He joined in the sports and races of the young men, with whom he was a favorite, but on occasion, when it was the head chief's pleasure, and he had smoked a quiet pipe with him, he tried his skill at the gambling blocks. Kam-i-ah-kan, that strong and manly sided man, loved a game of chance. It was his weakness. He rarely took the chips in his hands, but when he played it was as he did everything; intensely, passionately. He thought of nothing else. He knew no limit. He became an inebriate.

At such times when fortune favored him, the Walla Walla prolonged his visits a night, two nights, another day. Francesca came and went among the tepees apparently unnoticed, but she kept aloof, when she could, avoiding the young chief. The few intervals between games when he found her in a quiet

place he showed his satisfaction and lingered to talk to her. She listened gravely to his extravagant stories, encouraged him to vaunt himself, but when he questioned her about the Bostons, whom in some ways he oddly tried to emulate, she contrived to increase his respect for them. Every anecdote pointed a lesson. She never betrayed her fear of him, and, sometimes, under her growing self-command, down in the depths of her, an atom of Yakima subtlety wakened and stirred.

So spring warmed to the first week in June. The sun grew hot at midday on the plains. The Northern twilight lengthened and held for hours a soft after-glow. Then one evening Francesca went to bring water from the river. She stopped where the path dipped to a break in the high bank and looked off to the Cascade Mountains that rose, a cold black blue, in silhouette against the brilliant west. Her heart went out across the mighty barrier seeking the few friends in that country the other side. Vespers were over now, and Père La Framboise was resting in the balcony above the mission garden. The red roses must be in bloom and the breeze, coming salt with the flood tide, shook the branches and scattered fragrance everywhere. Oh, yes, it would be grand to-night in the curé's garden. And Baptiste, if he was at home, would be at supper. The younger children were having their fun, but he missed her. He was blaming his mother, poor, good Marie, for all that had occurred. And Billee, was he not bringing his pack train into Fort Nisqually? Did she not hear

his whistle, gay and sweet, up the trail in the edge of the wood? And presently, while he waited for his supper, he would take that fine guitar on his knee and play for the boys who loitered about the trading post door.

A soft radiance, not from the brilliant west, shone in her face, and, after a little, as she moved on into the cut, she sang in an undertone,

"We'll sing one song of the old Kentucky home,
The old Kentucky home — so far away."

Her voice broke but only for an instant. For that moment she stopped and a shiver ran through her; the light went out of her face. Then she finished the measure walking on steadily to the brink.

Close beside her, in the shadow of the cloven bank, Flying Hawk stood motionless, watching her. The Navajo blanket swung like a cloak from his shoulder, and on his bare chest a necklace of curious green stones, crudely finished and strung, struck a wonderful, flaming light. Three brass bracelets, catching the reflection from the river, flashed on his folded arms, but they might have clasped a figure in bronze. Only his eyes changed. They gathered a burning brilliancy.

His silence terrified her. Every nerve cried beware, and while she knelt and quietly dipped her basin into the stream, she was calling under her breath, "Mary, Mary, Mother of God!"

She rose, lifting the brimming vessel, and set it carefully down in the path between them. It was a

large, beautifully shaped bowl of woven grass; light as a basket, but close-fibred, firm as pottery. The geometrical design mellowed into the background with the harmony of a rare antique. For a moment she watched the water sparkling, pulsing over the sides of the basin, then she raised her eyes and met steadily the young chief's gaze.

"The Little Sister has learned to work," he said at last. "Like the Yakima squaw she works. Her face is brown. The hot sun of the plains has made her a little like a Yakima. Now the young men will not laugh when they see her in Flying Hawk's tepee. Now will Kam-i-ah-kan let me have her."

"Kam-i-ah-kan's eyes are not the eyes of Flying Hawk," she answered. "In the sight of the Yakima my work is poor. He sees, when I follow the hunt with the squaws, I am not able to take the skin of the killed. My knife slips; it spoils the good skin. When I go to dig the camas I bring home only a little, while the baskets of the squaws are full. I grow tired; my strength is small; like the Boston girl I have weak hands. For this Kam-i-ah-kan will not yet give me to Flying Hawk. To the young chief, who has long been as a son to him, he will not give so poor a mate."

"There are many strong squaws in the camp of Flying Hawk. They can work. The Little Sister need not do anything. Red is her mouth. The red Boston blood warms in her cheeks; her skin is fine and thin. Like the coat of the winter beaver her hair is soft and thick; it covers her. In Flying Hawk's tepee

she shall rest and do nothing. The new tepee is ready. It is lonely. Like the Boston I have waited for one mate. Long have I waited. Now, if Kam-ah-kan will not give me the Little Sister I will take her. As the black stallion was taken from the herd of the Spaniard, so from the camp of the great Yakima I, Flying Hawk, will take her away."

"You cannot take from Kam-i-ah-kan that which he will not give." Her voice vibrated a little and deepened. For an instant she paused. She seemed to gather height. In the semi-darkness her eyes were luminous like the water in the vessel at her feet. But they never wavered from his face. "You cannot steal me. The Yakima would follow. His fighting men would go with him to the village of the Walla Walla. There would be a battle. The lodges would be destroyed. Many strong men would fall. In the end Kam-i-ah-kan would take me and bring me home."

There was another silence. It was broken by a sound of voices far off towards the tepees. Then Flying Hawk said, "The Little Sister speaks well. Her eyes are the eyes of the Boston; she sees far. I must take the long trail. To a high place far off in the Rock mountains I will take her and keep her there. No Yakima can find her. It is a place of running water; the grass is long and thick; all summer it is a feeding ground. The horses will grow fat. The red deer are plenty; the does wait there with their young. Long may I hide the Little Sister in safety, and when the first snow falls, and Kam-i-ah-kan is no longer angry, I will bring her home.

The brown horse is swift; swift is the spotted horse. I, Flying Hawk, will make them ready. To-night, when the camp is still, we will go."

The voices were coming nearer. Some young men, probably, were on their way down to the branch path which followed the bank to a favorite swimming hole.

"You cannot do that," she said steadily. "Does a Walla Walla bring trouble on his people and run away? Can the war chief Flying Hawk bring the angry Yakimas into his village, among the women and children, and himself not stay?"

The young chief's eyes wavered. The voices were very close. He moved a step and looked up through the cut. Her own glance followed, and she saw, as she expected, several figures approaching the branch to the swimming pool.

"You see it is better to wait a little. The Boston does not hurry. He waits for the woman's heart to speak. I have listened but mine has not yet told me to go. The Boston" — She bent and poured some of the water from the brimming bowl. "The Boston does not take everything; he gives something. He does not care so much for — her body —" her voice shook but she lifted the basin dexterously to her shoulder and gave him a level look — "he sees her soul." And she moved steadily up through the cut past the group at the branch.

The young chief stood in uncertainty. Francesca had spoken wisely. It was not a light matter to slight Kam-i-ah-kan. His scheme, hatched in

the heat of the moment, weakened. For less he had seen the great Yakima punish a whole village. The proximity of the swimming party hurried his decision to at least defer the flight, and he strode up the bank, and, overtaking the bathers, went with them to the pool. Possibly some flicker of the meaning of her final words penetrated his savage brain, but she had said, "A Boston does not take everything; he gives something." And this much he construed after his own way.

The next morning, under cover of the tepee, Francesca watched him mount the brown horse. She held the flap, making the merest peephole for her eyes, and Little Beaver, seated on her mat outside, with her weaving materials around her, blocked the door. He paced slowly past, up the tented street, looking searchingly between the lodges, then rode back, and stopped by the old squaw.

Francesca, shrinking away from the entrance, heard him say, "The Little Sister hides her face. I wish to give her something. Little Beaver, listen. I wish to give her these beads."

He took the green stones from his neck and dropped them shimmering, into the old mother's lap. She gave them little attention, and continued industriously to thread the strands of her basket. "Little Beaver, listen. The Boston who found the beads said they were priceless. While I, Flying Hawk, hunted the buffalo far, far over the Rock Mountains, in a high place where the many waters run small, I saw the man. He was digging in the ground. No

camas grew there and I stayed to see what he dug. Then the man put a small thing in the hole he had made, close to a mighty rock. Soon there was a great thunder; the earth shook; the rock fell on its face. My horses were afraid. I rode quickly away. When I turned home I came that way. The man was sick. He was alone; he had nothing; his horse was dead. He wished to go far to the many lodges of the Bostons, but he could not walk. He wanted my packhorse. He wished me to go with him around the camp of the Blackfeet and show him the safe way. For this reason he took the small bag that was hidden under his coat, and opened it to show me the beads. Half of them he gave but at last I took them all. The packhorse was good, and three Blackfeet that followed hot on our trail, I, Flying Hawk, killed."

Little Beaver nodded her head slowly. "Ah-de-dah!" she said, and afterwards, when the galloping hoofs of the brown horse grew faint on the plain, she repeated "Ah-de-dah!" She was thinking of the Blackfeet; but presently, when she moved a little to reach another ribbon of grass, the sunshine struck the necklace in her lap. She lifted it, turning it, flashing, before her dim eyes, and called Francesca to come and take the gift.

Two days later the summer camp moved up the Yakima to the pine groves of the foothills. A little higher up the Cedar River trail touched Lake Kit-chelas and lifted to the lower slopes of the mountains. The Pass was not far off.

Francesca had been allowed the freedom of the lower country, and it was her habit, when the day's work was over, to mount her horse and ride through the long twilight. But now there was a difference. When she singled Skookum from the feeding band some one always watched her. If she turned into the by-paths of the hills a horseman, an even distance apart, took the same direction. If she chose the long trail she found the way patrolled. If she passed the first a final sentinel at the lake barred her. She learned she could travel unmolested, unnoticed down stream, but towards the mountains there was a limit beyond which she could not go.

Still, though she felt his net tighten, she made small advancement in the favor of Kam-i-ah-kan. Her attempts to win his approval met with indifference or contempt; always with silence. A propitious moment when she might speak of her father never arrived.

But sometimes she made short journeys with the young squaws along the lower slopes in search of material for weaving; and one day, following a rapid stream that flowed into the Yakima, they came upon two white men. Both were young, and one, who was carefully dipping a big shallow pan into the torrent, had hair the color of ripe wheat.

The squaws rode slowly by, curiously watching him, but Francesca stopped. It was a long time since she had seen a white face or heard English speech. She asked him shyly if he was trying to catch fish.

"Yes," and he paused to look up at her, laughing.

"Gold fish. But, wait, see here, girl, I'll show you the colors."

She urged Skookum a little closer to look at the sprinkle of sand in the bottom of the pan, while the man bent his bare, curly head over the basin, watching, turning it with a slow oscillating movement, separating a few yellow flakes from the grains.

The other man came nearer. "You're a mighty good-looking girl," he said. "And you understand English. I'll bet you can cook."

Francesca's glance moved to his face. She did not like it as well as the first, but she smiled a little. "Oh, yes, I'm able. I stay so long tam by French Marie's cabane and she ees be very fine to the cooking. But yes, Père La Framboise ees all tam say that; you can beli've it."

"French Marie." The fair man looked up again. "Why, George, that's the name of the woman who took us in that miserable night on the tramp from Cowlitz landing."

A sudden light shone in Francesca's face. She leaned forward a little. "You know Marie," she said quickly. "You have seen her and Baptiste and mebbe the children. Ees it you come but now over the Cedar River trail from Nisqually?"

The man shook his head looking back into his pan. "We were at Fort Nisqually, yes, but that was about six weeks ago. French Marie gave us a mighty good supper one wet night. We crossed the mountains farther north, by way of the Snoqualmie."

Many questions rushed to her lips, but before she

could ask the first one, the man George noticed on her breast Flying Hawk's present.

"My God!" he said, and reaching grasped the chain.

"Look at this, John. They're emeralds."

John looked and put his pan down on the bank.

"You're right." He spoke softly and his voice trembled. "But be careful, man; be careful. These Indians of the upper Columbia are touchy."

Francesca tried to draw away, but the man's grip tightened. The trail curved below, winding through a pine grove, and the squaws had disappeared. Skookum neighed and started after the horses, but the fellow moved with him, laying a hand on the rein and keeping his hold on the necklace.

His partner overtook him. "See here, George, you'll bring trouble, sure, before we can find out where these stones came from."

At this the man's grasp relaxed, but he kept on at her horse's neck. One of the squaws called and Francesca answered. They had missed her and were coming back to the curve to see what delayed her. But she drew Skookum in and turned to the man John. "Monsieur," she said, "I lak to ask 'bout that trail of Snoqualmee. It ees far from this plas, yes?"

"Well rather, making it the way we came, around the other side of the lake. It's through underbrush, a hit or miss trail on a mountain side, breaking at a bluff, catching on the ragged edge of things."

"Sacré, monsieur, then it ees mooch best to take a horse down the Yakima and so around by the

prairie. You think so, yes? It ees not pos'ble you miss the long trail, monsieur? "

" I don't see how you could, riding straight north. It was a plain, well-beaten track as far as we came. Looked like it cut the plain sheer east to the Columbia. But see here, girl, won't you tell me where you got that necklace? "

The color burned in Francesca's cheek through the tan. " But yes, monsieur. It ees present from the friend of my uncle, Kam-i-ah-kan the Yakima. It ees pos'ble there are more stones lak them; oh yes, for sure; but the plas ees far from here in the Rock Mountains." And she rode on toward the bend, where the squaws waited, watching her.

XI

LITTLE BEAVER'S MEMORIES

FRANCESCA, seated on a knoll under some pines which fringed the river, swiftly wove the final round of a Yakima saddle-bag. It was beautifully made, a pattern of stars harmoniously blending soft greens and blues with subdued pinks, that shaded to Indian red and brown on a background of maize. Near her Little Beaver was coloring grasses. She covered a loose bundle with a preparation of red mold, and immersed another in a solution of berries; then she lifted a dripping bunch from a of steeped alder leaves and bent close, trying to determine with her dim sight, the tone of green.

Sometimes the bark of a dog rose from the tented village, which was hidden by the grove, or the shout of a boy broke the stillness; once a bird called and was answered by another far away, but for long intervals the only sound was the voice of the Yakima, running broad and deep and full.

At length Francesca held up her finished work at arm's-length, and looked it over critically. Her lips parted a little in a smile. Then she spread the fabric on her lap, smoothing it and again examined it closely. It was as firm, and nearly as pliable as a piece of tapestry. Its durability and carrying

capacity almost equaled a bag of leather. Presently her eyes moved to the copy which hung against the bole of a tree near her. The background had mellowed from maize to brown, into which the colors of the design shaded like the figures of some old Moslem prayer rug; but the texture was unbroken; it had not frayed anywhere, at the edges. And her mother had made it. Here on this bank, in the shade of this grove, long ago she had sat weaving her strands of ribbon grass. It had been Singing Bird's first saddle-bag.

The task had been slow, exceedingly difficult, but the finished work compared favorably with the pattern. It was Francesca's best proof that with the inconstant white blood Kam-i-ah-kan so despised, was mingled a little of the industry and patience of her Yakima mother. Now, surely, when she gave him this bag, he would be pleased. In the moment of his surprise he would speak, and before he hardened, she would learn, adroitly, what she had come to ask about her father.

She looked up, still smiling, and her eyes rested on Little Beaver. She had seated herself on the bank near her steeping receptacles. Her wrinkled hands were clasped around her knees; her glance was turned towards the bag against the pine tree, but a little higher, as though she saw something far off. Her eyes had lost their dullness. It was as though the curtains had been dragged from them and long hidden fires shone through.

Francesca understood. It was one of those rare

intervals when the old mother's memory wakened. She was living again some hour of the past. The girl's swift imagination coupled the surroundings with Little Beaver's thoughts. The green bank under the pine trees; the voice of the Yakima; she, herself, sitting where her mother had so often worked, completing the saddle-bag, had recalled Singing Bird. Francesca rose quietly and went over and laid the new bag on the old squaw's knees. Her glance fell. Her hands unclasped. The sun, sifting down through the branches, brought out the colors and sharply defined each star. She began to draw her fingers slowly along the weave.

Finally she began to intone, deliberately, like one speaking in her sleep. "Singing Bird sat weaving under the pine trees. Many days, while the camas grew and the berries came on the salmon lush, Singing Bird sat weaving, weaving. Her fingers were swift. The bag was finished. She brought it to her father. To the head chief, Red Wing, she brought the bag. He saw the seven stars on it; the colors of each star he saw. He said the bag was good. But, that the load on his horse might be even he said the bag must have a mate. Again Singing Bird sat weaving, weaving. Faster her fingers moved. The sun grew hot on the plain; the grass dried. It was brown. The does led their young to the green banks of the Yakima. Under the pine trees Singing Bird saw them feed unafraid. The young birds cried in their nests; their feathers grew; they flew away. Then, when the wind drew cool from the mountains,

came the White Wolf. Many times he came watching Singing Bird at her work. He saw the bag was good. He desired it. When it was finished she gave it to him. To the White Wolf she gave the mate of the bag she had made for her father, Red Wing."

Francesca sank down on the grass beside the old mother. "But," she said gently, "the White Wolf gave something in its place."

Little Beaver nodded slowly. Her eyes were fixed again on that point far away. "The White Wolf gave a knife, big and sharp it was on two sides. To Red Wing he gave it and kept the bag. It was a good knife; the belt that carried it was strong." She nodded her head again profoundly, and after a moment went on. "The White Wolf's gun was good. He showed Red Wing how a very little of the black powder made a great thunder; how the ball from the gun went like an arrow swift and straight. A deer, a buffalo, a bear the Red Wing killed with the gun. It pleased him greatly. He desired it. He gave for it what the White Wolf asked. He gave Singing Bird."

Little Beaver clasped her knees. She began to rock herself slowly, though her eyes were still fixed on that distant point as if she saw there the moving figures of a dream.

Francesca drew nearer. She laid her hand on the old mother's arm. "The White Wolf was not alone," she said softly. "Other Bostons came with him to the Yakima. They called him —" Her voice vibrated and broke; her imagination, ready to prop,

bridge that failing memory, could go no farther. Her eyes rested on the old squaw's face in an intensity of appeal. "Think, Little Beaver. You heard his Boston name."

But it was as though Francesca had not spoken. "The White Wolf took her away," Little Beaver went on, raising her voice. "Over the mountains, to the country of the Blackfeet he took the Singing Bird. He left her there. Ah-de-dah! Two Nez Perces saw this done. The Nez Perces went with the White Wolf. Far, far across the big muddy waters; far, far to the many lodges of the Bostons they went. They came back alone. They looked for Singing Bird, as the White Wolf told them, to bring her home. Long the Nez Perces looked in the country of the Blackfeet, but they could not find her. Ah-de-dah! Singing Bird was gone."

Little Beaver paused, lamenting, rocking herself anew. "Many, many moons passed. Some Yakimas riding far, near the country of the Navajos, saw a new Boston strong house. Many soldiers were there. The White Wolf was their head chief. This word the Yakimas brought Red Wing. Many moons passed. Some Klickitats riding far, far through the land of the Spanish saw the White Wolf leading his men. The Klickitats followed. Two days and two nights they followed. Hot on the trail of the Apache rode the Bostons. They fought; many fell. Many Apaches fell with them. But no ball, no arrow found the White Wolf. Unhurt he went back to the great strong house."

There was a brief silence, then Little Beaver began to rock her body in a fresh paroxysm. "Red Wing was dead. Ah-de-dah! Dead was the great Yakima. Ah-de-dah! Ah-de-dah! The young chier Kam-i-ah-kan was set in his place. Two runners brought word. The White Wolf was coming. On the far side of the Columbia he came riding a gray horse. Many soldiers were with him. Before the door of his tepee Kam-i-ah-kan waited. Other runners came. The White Wolf was gone. He was crossing the Snake. To the Boston strong house, down in the land of the Multnomahs, he rode with his men. The Yakimas were forgotten. Forgotten were the people of Singing Bird."

Little Beaver paused again. Francesca leaned towards her, waiting, eager to question, yet holding herself in check. "Four moons passed. Word came the White Wolf was riding back. On the near side of the Columbia he rode with his men. Kam-i-ah-kan waited. Before his tepee the great chief waited. Near, near to the lodges came the White Wolf, but he turned the gray horse. To the Pass in the mountains he turned; to the land of the Nisquallies. Then Kam-i-ah-kan caught his horse. His swift horse, Whirlwind, he caught and rode fast to a narrow place high up, where the soldiers must cross. Like the eagle he waited, watching from a mighty rock. The riders came. They passed below him. The runners were right. The man was the White Wolf."

Little Beaver's glance wavered and rested on the bag against the pine tree. But her face lost expres-

sion. The light in her eyes faded. It was as though in a last high flame of excitement the fires burned out. Her memory was lapsing. She was sinking into her accustomed apathy.

Francesca laid her hand on the old mother's arm. "Word came from the land of the Nisquallies," she began, steadying her voice and imitating the squaw's intonation. "To Kam-i-ah-kan word was brought."

Little Beaver nodded her head. A final flicker leaped in her eyes. "At the time of the great council a Spokane brought word. The Spokane carried peltries," she went on slowly, groping and gathering fragments of fact. "One of the French was with him. They went the long trail, far, far, to the Hudson Bay house in the land of the Nisquallies. They passed a new strong house of the Bostons. Many soldiers were there. The White Wolf was with them. Him the Spokane saw, riding his gray horse. A woman rode with him. Fleet was her horse and his coat was red. Like the red deer he moved on the plain. The woman was young. Her hair was pale like the winter sun; as the snow on the mountains at sunrise was her face. She was the daughter of the White Wolf. This a Nisqually told the Spokane, and the Nisqually had seen in the strong house the White Wolf's Boston wife. Singing Bird was forgotten. Ah-de-dah! Long was she forgotten. The child of Singing Bird was as a worthless moccasin left on the trail."

Little Beaver's face dropped forward. She rocked

herself, repeating her lament over and over. But Francesca no longer listened. She got to her feet. A fine exultation shone in her eyes; it trembled on her lips; glorified her whole face. All that she had waited, hoping against defeat, to win from Kam-i-ah-kan she had learned in the brief awakening of the old squaw. It was as Père La Framboise had believed. Her father was a great man. He was that new Commandant of whom Billee had spoken; and that beautiful mademoiselle, of whom he had told her that last day at the spring, whom she herself had seen later, riding the bay horse, with the fine young officer walking beside her on the plain — she was her sister.

But even then, in that supreme moment, Francesca remembered to cover her excitement. Several squaws were approaching the river. She bent and picked up the saddle-bag which had slipped from Little Beaver's knees, and turned and walked quietly past them into the seclusion of the grove. She did not count the perils she had braved so needlessly; the pitfalls of the Cedar River trail, its hardships; the solitary nights in the mountains; her escape from Flying Hawk; the risk, always imminent, of falling into his hands. She only remembered that hardly three months ago, when, at the beginning of her journey she had passed the new garrison, she had been very close to her father. Three months; what days were lost. But she would make them up. She would hurry. She would be back at Nisqually soon.

The blood raced in her veins. In the solitude of the trees her steps quickened. She was moving down the river path in the direction of a small open where Skookum, hobbled, grazed with a small band of Kam-i-ah-kan's horses. The day she had learned from the prospector the way to the Snoqualmie trail, she had determined to take that route to elude Flying Hawk, in that hour when he could no longer be put off. On one of her evening rides she had gone north until she found the broad, well-beaten trail, lifting towards the mountain pass; and after that she had cached in a rocky cleft, several miles down stream, one of her blankets and the burden basket which had survived the accident in the snow tunnel, bringing and storing in it, piecemeal, a small food supply. There was nothing to delay her now. She had only to mount and canter as usual, down the valley, and, stopping to secure her outfit, ride north, keeping under cover of the benches of the plain, to the Snoqualmie road; and so on to the divide.

At the thought of it she laughed softly and flaunted the gay saddle-bag in exhilaration. Then, suddenly, she stopped. Somewhere, just before her, an Indian had spoken. Another answered, and, after a moment, she caught the whir and click of gambling blocks. The first voice, deep, authoritative, was Kam-i-ah-kan's. Of this she was sure, and, moving a cautious step, she saw between the boughs the brown muscular shoulders of the great Yakima. He was seated on the bank at the side of the path, with his back to her. The opposite player, a young sub-

chief, gave her small attention, for he was noting with gloomy stoicism, the results of his throw.

Francesca drew a full breath. What fortune. To-night she was safe. In the morning the young squaws, finding she had not slept in the lodge, would let Kam-i-ah-kan know. But Skookum was swift. She could trust him, anywhere, in the dark.

She walked on, but, glancing again at the young chief as she came abreast of him, she stumbled. Her smile died. There rose instead unspeakable revulsion, almost terror. Fastened at the Indian's belt she saw two newly taken scalps. It was not their freshness that so appalled her — she had come upon such trophies before — but the color of the hair. Neither was black, but one was of the shade of ripened wheat.

She moved another stumbling step and saw, flashing in a ray of sunshine, on the bank an arm's-length from the Indian, a shallow pan. A little farther a rifle rested on the bole of a pine, and, tilted at the foot of the tree, a second basin. It held a powder flask and a small hammer. Then, presently, as she hurried on, she reached the young chief's two horses. They were wet still, from long and hard going, and the pack which had been taken from the back of one lay unbound on the ground, where he had relieved it of the best of the loot. Several worn blankets remained, and a half-filled sack, such as a settler or prospector finds convenient in carrying supplies.

She pulled herself straight. Her steps grew surer, less panic-driven. She began to face the truth

collectedly. The two prospectors had been murdered. And a Yakima had done it. A Yakima! And Kam-i-ah-kan the head chief, Kam-i-ah-kan who had signed the great treaty, was gambling for the spoils. What would the Governor think? He would pass soon, on his way home from the last distant council, and what would he think? What would he not do?

And her father, when the news reached the garrison, what would he think? But now she understood. Now, at last, she saw why he had avoided the Yakimas. At first he had been deceived, they made so fine a show; he had believed, as she had, that they were different; better, smarter than other Indians. But he had found them out. They had the hearts of lying infidels. Their souls were small. That was why he had nothing more to do with them. That was why, if he had ever known about her, he had had nothing to do with her.

The color flamed in her cheeks. For a moment the old shame overwhelmed her. Then she put it down. The Indian blood was thin in her. Had not Père La Framboise, Baptiste, Billee always told her that? Had not Kam-i-ah-kan acknowledged it? It would die out. It had already, to-day. There was not one drop of Yakima left in her. She knew it. Her father had only to look in her face and he must know it, too. She was white, all white, bone, flesh and blood — and *soul*.

She had reached the thinning trees in the edge of the open. A horse neighed. Then she saw Kam-i-

ah-kan's band grouped uneasily, watchfully, off to the left. Skookum, his length in front of the rest, sent a second inquiry into the opposite grove. An answer rang close, and, a moment later, two fine pack animals paced out of the wood, and, at a shout from the unseen driver, came to a stop in the pasture. They were laden with blankets, and the end of the roll nearest her showed the gay pattern of a Navajo folded in.

Francesca stood, rocking a little on her feet, steadying herself with her hand on a pine, while Flying Hawk, leading the black stallion, rode into the open and threw himself from the brown horse. Then the moment of weakness passed. The self-command, the resource of the superior race rose strong in her, and down in the depths of her that spark of Yakima subtlety quickened. She thought swiftly; very clearly. This was that surprise against which she had prepared. A little courage, a little caution and she would be safely off beyond pursuit.

She turned and reaching into the meshes of the pine, drew out her bridle, and feeling farther, pulled her saddle from under the bough, and carried them, with the bag, into the open. She held her head high and, without seeming to see the Walla Walla, walked firmly across to her horse.

Kam-i-ah-kan's band, no longer suspicious, fell to feeding, and the brown horse, followed by the pack animals, began eagerly to browse, but the black stallion, newly broken, gave the young chief a troublesome interval before he settled to cropping the green

river grass. Francesca loosened the thongs that hobbled Skookum's forefeet, and slipped the bit between his teeth; but while she placed the saddle and drew the straps through the buckles of the girth, Flying Hawk approached and, folding his arms, stood watching her.

As she moved little sparks leaped along the necklace and presently he said, "Like the Boston I, Flying Hawk, have given the Little Sister something. Now will her heart speak. Now has she learned to work. Like Kam-i-ah-kan's squaws the Little Sister weaves the strong bag that does not hurt the back of the horse." He paused and stooped to lift the new saddle-bag from the grass. He ran his fingers lightly over the texture, then held it off to catch the effect of the design and the harmonious coloring. "The Little Sister has done well," he added. "It is a good bag; the kind I have long wanted."

"The bag was made for Kam-i-ah-kan," she answered quietly. "To-day it was finished; but when I found him by the river I could not give it to him. A young Yakima was with him. They were busy with the gambling blocks and could not be disturbed. I worked hard to finish the present. All day I worked and the sun was warm. But now it grows cooler and there is time to ride my little horse down to the plain. I shall feel the wind soft and pleasant in my face. When I come back I will show the bag to Kam-i-ah-kan."

"The great Yakima has others. His squaws can

make more for him. But I have none. The Little Sister will give the bag to me."

Francesca was thoughtful. After a moment she said, "Then it will be necessary to make another, that the weight may rest even on the brown horse. I must keep the bag for a pattern."

"The Little Sister speaks well. The bag must have a mate. In the shade of the willows by the Walla Walla she shall weave the mate. The many waters will sing for her; all day they will sing and at night she will hear their music when she rests in the new tepee. The new tepee is lonely; long has it been lonely, but now, to-day, Kam-i-ah-kan will give the Little Sister to me. I will speak and, when the great Yakima sees the black stallion and the two horses picked from the Walla Walla's herd, he will listen. When he counts the twenty blankets and finds not one poor one, he will give the Little Sister to me."

Francesca's glance moved to the laden animals and then to the handsome black. "The stallion is much too fine to give for a woman; the two horses picked from the choice herd are enough. And it was not necessary to put the priceless Navajo blanket with the rest. When the frost wind comes sharp on the plain Flying Hawk will ride cold. No other blanket is fit for him. Have I not seen him on the brown horse, wrapped in the priceless Navajo? Beside him the other young men were common and small. Many tyees were among them, but the war chief, Flying Hawk, was the greatest of all." She paused, meeting

his look steadily, watching, weighing his mounting pride. "What waste, to give so much for one small woman."

"The Little Sister is worth much. She has only a little Indian blood; and that is the blood of the great Kam-i-ah-kan. The rest is Boston. Like the Boston she thinks quick; she sees far; she has the Boston tongue. I have long wanted a Boston wife. I wish but one mate. I am able to pay well for her."

"Flying Hawk, listen. I am very poor. I have only Skgokum, my little horse. Since I came to Kam-i-ah-kan and he saw the Boston was strong in me, he has given me nothing." Francesca's voice broke, for the first time, but she still held the Walla Walla's gaze with her compelling eyes. It was as though she forced his mind to grasp her thought before the words were out. "His presents to you will be small," she went on slowly, "but — you know the gambling blocks. No other young chief has your skill. You only are able to play like Kam-i-ah-kan. He is there by the river, at the bend of the twin pine. The Yakima who is with him has not much to lose. His game will be short."

She paused again. Her eyes did not waver from the Walla Walla's face, but her hands unconsciously grasped the necklace; the beautiful stones slipped like water through her restless fingers, and, catching the sunshine, struck a score of lights on her heaving breast.

Then, suddenly, understanding leaped in the young chief's face. His eyes flashed. His lips broke in their

fierce smile. "The Little Sister speaks well," he said. "I will find Kam-i-ah-kan. By the river I will find him, now, while the gambling blocks are warm in his hands. The game will be long, but at the last I will play for the Little Sister."

He swung quickly and started towards the grove through which she had lately come. Francesca laughed softly. "Play carefully, Flying Hawk," she said, and her voice took its sweetest contralto note, "play carefully, that the black stallion and the priceless Navajo may not be lost."

She stood another moment, watching him, but when he reached the edge of the pines she turned to Skookum and, mounting, rode easily down the valley, away from the mountains, into the unguarded lower country.

XII

SNOQUALMIE CROSSING

BEHIND Francesca, rimming a small prairie, loomed the peaks and ridges of the divide; the last wooded postern had closed on the difficulties of the Pass; but before her rolled the Snoqualmie, deep and dangerously strong, flush with its banks in July flood. She stood alternately reading the current, the opposite shore and her jaded horse.

Presently she turned and took his drooping muzzle between her palms. "Skookum," she admonished, "you un'stand it grows harder all tam to cross; we are not able wait. Come, mon tenas cayuse, charco. You are not 'fraïd. You have the strong heart."

She went up the shore to the nearest trees and, selecting a large fir bough, broad, springy, thick with twigs, secured to its centre her water-tight burden basket, capping it with her saddle and blanket, lashed firmly with withes of willow. Skookum's lariat, made fast to his tail, became the towline of this raft. Finally she slipped off her clothing, tucked it snugly under the blanket, and, starting the pony, plunged with him into the flood. She swam easily, her beautiful arms and shoulders parting the current, and the horse came on pluckily, while the float dipped to an

eddy, righted, swung the length of the hawser and trailed on. Mid-channel a great uprooted pine bore down, with upreared trunk and mesh of branches, and she held Skookum's head up-stream, treading water, fighting the suction, while the wreckage passed.

They made the bank at last, skirting a submerged log and feeling for foothold among thorny vines. The worn pony struggled to higher ground and stopped, winded; but Francesca pulled herself erect, dripping, and drawing a full breath, laughed. "Merci," she said between deeper breaths, "we ees 'scape. The brown horse doant swim Snoqualmie, for sure. Skookum, tenas cayuse," and she laid her cheek against his neck, "there ees not one those fine horses of the prairie so smart lak you."

She stood another moment, letting the pony's muzzle seek her hand; while she dressed he watched her with steady, trusting, almost human eyes. His sides were still heaving when she placed the meagre outfit on him, and she pushed on afoot, picking up the trail into the dense forest. It wound between maples, gnarled, cushioned with thick bronze moss; it widened in cathedral aisles, arched by firs and hemlocks, and cedars centuries old draped in long gray moss. Finally on the silence rose the organ roll of falls; then the path led down to the brink of a precipice, fronting the great leap of Snoqualmie. Fed by three forks it was a plunge of nearly three hundred feet, and, constantly shaken into the lace points of a voluminous veil, it had the splendor of

an avalanche of snow. Rainbows spanned it, and every shadow, even the momentary shifting of the wind, or, a puff of mist, gave it new majesty or charm.

Francesca stood long on the cliff, with folded arms, head high, contemplating that flow. It called up the imagination of the Indian, the best forces of the Yakima, and appealed to all those finer emotions of the higher white. She was a beautiful human instrument, sensitive to great Nature's touch, capable of grand music or black discord. That diapason of Snoqualmie struck in the depths of her a responsive chord.

At last she turned aside to make her little camp and allow her horse the necessary respite. Free of his lariat, but with hobbled forefeet, he moved with short leaps, cropping eagerly the herbage which, fostered by alternate sunshine and mist, grew luxuriantly there.

The following morning she pushed down to the second crossing below the cataract. She looked for the canoe, the usual ferry kept by the Indians in such breaks of a beaten trail, but it was not on that side. Then she stood searching the opposite shore. Presently she discovered the end of the craft, drawn up in the undergrowth, and she lifted her voice in long "Cla-how-ya! Cla-how-ya!"

The call rang a startled response from bluff on bluff. She repeated it in a still deeper key, and this time it was answered by a man's voice, with decreasing distance, in three languages. "Cla-how-ya. Cla-

how-ya. Bo'jour. Hello, Francesca. Hello dare."

It was Baptiste, her foster brother. He broke from the thicket, and at sight of her threw his squirrel-skin cap high in the air, caught it in delight, and set it on his head with a jauntiness. Then, calling another excited "Hello, Francesca, hello dare," he bent his great frame to launching the canoe and speedily embarked.

He dipped a deep and powerful stroke that brought him quickly over, and, springing out, pulled the prow of the canoe high among some cedars, and turned to Francesca with open arms. "So," he said, "so it ees ma leetle gal ees come back all dat lonesoom trail by Snoqualmee. She ees come tell me dat it ees one beeg mistake, for sure, dat she doant lak marry me."

She moved back step by step, putting her hands behind her, aloofness in her pose. "No, Baptiste, it ees you who mek mistake. I lak only this canoe, right 'way, to put my blanket over dry."

The Canadian stopped. His arms fell and he stood regarding her with clouding eyes. "Well," he said at length, "dat ees all right, Francesca, so dat I see you some more by de house when I come home. And ma mother Marie, she too ees glad to see you 'roun'. She ees tell me 'bout how she ees tro'ble you so mooch 'bout me dat you go 'way to Kam-i-ah-kan's camp. And it ees but yesterday I tell her some more she ees one beeg fool."

Francesca began silently and swiftly to unpack the pony and carry her outfit to the canoe. When she

was ready and stood holding the loose coil of Skookum's lariat, Baptiste pushed off and held the craft against the swift current while she stepped in. She spoke to the horse, the rope ran out, straightened its length, and he plunged into the flood. Once, mid-stream, he lost and swung to an eddy, but the powerful dip of Baptiste's paddle stayed the canoe, and the compelling strain on the line kept the pony's head above the wash while he recovered. And so at last they came slowly and safely to the other shore.

The Canadian pulled up the canoe, and the pony stumbled a few steps and stood shivering in the sun. Francesca laid her hand on his dripping neck. "Merci, Baptiste," her lip trembled and she looked at the voyageur with a mist in her eyes, "you ees help me gre't. Mebbe — mebbe this tam, if I try bring Skookum over 'lone, he ees lost."

"Oh, dat ees nothing, Francesca; for sure dat ees nothing. I have de strong arm." He laughed, a deep, loud laugh, and its echo mocked him from the heart of the wood. "But come. I have yet mon leetle fire an' two fine trout what I catch by de beeg pool. A'm able mek you one nice breakfas', for sure, while Skookum ees fin' hees win'."

She followed him to his temporary camp, a shelter of bark set against a great trunk, a blanket, the fire burned to a bed of coals, and a few steel traps under a fir. He swung the trout from bent switches in front of the embers, and moved in boyish delight, arranging two cedar plates on a log and placing his hunting

knife, and a loaf of French Marie's bread in the centre of the board.

It was very pleasant in that little open. All the cleared space encircling the fire was overrun with Washington holly; a natural vineyard of tall, stiff stems, that held at the heart of prickly, burnished foliage, great clusters of yellow bloom. A breeze, drawing down the watercourse, stirred the boughs above the seat where Francesca waited and recounted her adventures, while behind her, on the green wall of the jungle, a rhododendron unfolded its palmlike leaves and flowered showily.

"So," said Baptiste at last, while he stooped to turn the trout, "so, you have see all dose gran' chiefs of Columbia to de gran' counceel of Monsieur le Governor. Sacré, an' he ees mek dem sign de beeg treaty to give 'way dose fine prairie. How ees dat, Francesca; he was mek dem 'fraid?"

"I doant know, Baptiste, for sure; but he ees talk long tam an' so pleasantlee, and they un'stand the Nez Perces are his tillicums an' camp close by his tent. But Flying Hawk, the yo'ng chief of the Walla Wallas, was not 'fraid. He ees all tam laugh, for he has hear so beeg story from the Blackfoot, who he made prisoner when he was hunt the buffalo."

"I have not hear 'bout dat," said Baptiste with anticipation.

"Well, it ees this. The Blackfoot saw Monsieur le Governor that first tam, when he ees arrive by the Rock Mountains; and he told Flying Hawk how he was so beeg man and strong; and how his horse was

able climb high rocks lak the grizzly bear, because he ees have long claws. And the horse's neck was lak the new moon, and his neigh lak the clouds hot with thunder."

Baptiste laugh d loudly. "Dat ees one gre't joke," he said. "Saprie, I have not beli've a Black-foot can mek so fine yarn. An' de yo'ng chief, Francesca, he ees think it ees true, hey?"

She nodded her head gravely. "But, when Flying Hawk saw Monsieur le Governor, and the horse he ees ride, he must tek that Blackfoot and tie him to the cottonwood tree, and then, Baptiste, because he ees tell so beeg lie, the yo'ng chief must shoot him — straight to the mouth. Yes," she went on, turning in haste from the unpleasant sequel, "Flying Hawk ces gre't tyee. Not one those yo'ng chiefs of prairie ees so gran' lak him. He has go mooch to hunt the buffalo, far in the co'ntry of the Blackfeet, he ees not 'fraid, for sure, and three tams he has go the long trail to the co'ntry of the Spanish. And, Baptiste, he has tell me 'bout En-chush-chesh-she-luxum, that ees the lac of Never-freezing Water. He has come to the top those high rocks, no Indian can go down, and he has see far, far in that fine water, the mighty elk and deer and buffalo of the Yakima heaven."

She paused and gave her listener a swift, sidelong look from under her lashes, but Baptiste heard with the grave attention of the simple nature that accepts, unquestioned, all things that he has not seen and does not understand.

"And," she continued, "Flying Hawk has find by that lac two beeg, fine birds, white as the new snow, and he has no tro'ble to tek them alive and bring them home. But, because the medicine man was hiyu solleks and ees say the birds are two yo'ng white squaws that Tyee Saghalee ees punish, and must bring mooch onhappiness to Flying Hawk, he ees keel them both for gran' feast of Kam-i-ah-kan."

"Monjee." Baptiste's voice was husky; his lips were pale. "An' it ees from dis Flying Hawk ma leetle gal ees 'scape. Merci, Mary; merci." He stood pondering a silent moment, then added slowly, "For dis A'm going to promise one candle ev'ry week, so long I iive."

Francesca reminded him of the trout and he sprang to take them from the fire. She reached and plucked a sprig of hemlock, rubbing it between her palms and inhaling the fragrance. "Yes, Baptiste, it ees good I am here. I lak to burn two candles. But," she went on, presently, "I stay so long tam by Kam-i-ah-kan's camp I am mooch 'fraid I grow lak a Yakima squaw. You ees beli've that too, Baptiste?"

He stopped, midway to the improvised table with the trout, and looked at her. "No, ma leetle gal ees more brown, for sure, from dose hot sun of de prairee, but she ees not lak Injun, no."

"But those white men who live by Nisqually," — she leaned towards him, watching for the trace of a shadow on his open face; a soft vibration crept into her voice, — "they must say, 'Francesca, that no-'count half-breed ees come back?'"

The Canadian laid the trout on the table and regarded her again, gravely. "No, dey doan' say dat. Sacré, it would not be good for dem to say dat, Francesca." He paused and raised his great arm, bared to the elbow, in a significant gesture. "A'ready A'm show dem it ees not best dey spik 'bout you. I — an' Mo'sieur Haworth ees show dem."

"Ye-s?"

"Ya-as." He seated himself on the opposite log and cut for her a generous slice from the loaf. "It ees lak dis. Mo'sieur ees order one fine instrumen' from Kebec; de guitah dat ees mek nice museek but not so gran', for sure, lak mon vio'lin; an' de factor ees say to heem, 'How ees it, mo'sieur; ees some acciden' happen to your instrumen' dat you must buy a new one?' An' he ees rip'ly, 'Oh, no, I but order dis guitah for Francesca.' Den dose boys who ees leesten by de door, mus' laugh an' mek some fun on me. So I say, 'Mo'sieur, how ees it you give dis gran' instrumen' to Francesca? Ees it dat 'is no-'count rabble may laugh on her?' An' he ees rip'ly, ver' quiet, but so dose soldiers who come in de gate can hear, 'No, Baptiste. You mus' un'stan' when we was chillun Francesca was mon leetle comrade. An' she ees ver' smart to learn; she ees have de museek ear; an' she doan' have many friends to help her; it ees all right I give her dis one presen' to mek her happee.' An' when he ees say dat, he ees stan' so straight an' fine to look roun' on dose sacré boys, dey doan' be able spik one word."

The voyageur paused, watching the soft illumina-

tion in her face. Before his look her lashes fell, and the color came and went through her tan. Finally she turned her head, and, reaching, broke a rhododendron flower from the shrub behind her, and began absently to strip the petals.

"An' presen'ly," the Canadian resumed, "when I come way from de Post, mo'sieur ees wait outside de gate, an' he ees say, 'She ees stay long tam by de Yakima, Baptiste; ees it pos'ble somet'ing ees happen to her?' An' I ees rip'ly, 'But ya-as A'm mooch 'fraid 'bout dat, monself; an' when I go for fix mon beaver traps to dose gran' fall of Snoqualmee, mebbe A'm able go leetle farder, over de Pass, an' fin' her.'"

He waited another interval, but Francesca had nothing to say. Finally she rose and looked at her horse.

"Francesca," — and he also rose, still watching her face, — "dose men by Nisqually sometams spik true; an' dey ees say mo'sieur ees ride mooch to de garrison. He ees veesit de house of Mo'sieur le Commandan' to play hees museek for ma'am'selle."

Francesca laughed softly. "That ees all right, Baptiste. Mo'sieur tole me 'bout that, for sure," and she went over to her horse. The Canadian followed and silently helped her with the pack. She mounted and he walked with her a short distance, his hand on the pony's neck. Then, "Good-by, Baptiste," she said. "I hope you have the gran' luck to the beaver traps."

"Good-by, Francesca. But dat ees de gran' luck

on me, A'm goin' fin' ma leetle gal to de cabane when I come home."

His hand fell from the horse's neck, but he stood watching her down the trail. At the first bend she stopped and looked back. Then she turned Skookum. Baptiste met her half way.

"I lak to tell you I m not going to Marie's cabane some more, Baptiste; you doant be able see me there when you come home. But leesten." She dropped her voice as though the trees might overhear. "I have so *gran'* secret. It ees — but you mus not spik 'bout it, for sure — it ees that the beautiful white mademoiselle to the garrison, who ees ride the fine bay horse, who we learn all tam so mocch 'bout — *she ees my — sister.*"

XIII

THE CAMP AT THE SPRING

THE sun dipped below the forest. Far behind Francesca the heights of Issaquah reddened briefly and darkened to purplish blue, then she turned a bend in the trail and the summit was cut off by the interminable battalions of the firs. At last she was on familiar ground. A few miles further the trail divided, one fork curving southward towards the Hudson Bay post, the other keeping westward to the white settlement of Seattle, and a short distance beyond the branch, on the Nisqually road, she remembered there was a small open and a spring. She urged Skookum, eager to make her night camp there.

The long twilight deepened, but her ear, attuned to Nature, caught a hundred soft, companionable sounds; the complaining note of the peewee; the intimate appeal of a thrush. Her eyes, too, followed in the stirring of a bough, a rustle of leaves, the trail of a belated chipmunk; and she saw in the brownish-grey obstruction, set like a rough knob on a log, a motionless grouse on guard over her nest. Then gradually all this comradeship ceased, and she felt only the crowding, intangible personality of the great silence.

Finally there came an intrusion; distant, faint,

the merest breath of sound sifting the solitudes. She drew her rein, listening. Her blood quickened with surprise and delight. Yes, surely, it was the silver bell of the curé's white mule.

Skookum pricked his ears and mended his pace, and presently the sound of the bell rang steadily with the rapid motion of the browsing animal. "So you hear that?" Francesca laughed softly. "Père La Framboise ees camp, for sure, to the spring. But charco, mon tenas cayuse, charco."

At length the glow of the camp-fire illumined the high tops of the firs and sifted the lower gloom. Then suddenly the note of the bell was lost in another sound that broke on the solitudes, deep, sonorous, with increasing volume. It was the great bass voice of the Jesuit holding vespers with his small escort.

Francesca approached near enough to see the ample figure of the father standing over his kneeling following, then she hurriedly slipped from her horse, and, finding her rosary under her dress, sank to her own knees in the outer shadows.

The curé finished the service with unusual haste. He had sent two young Indians in advance to the spring, to make the camp ready, and particularly to bury in the ground beneath the fire, a beef's-head, wrapped in a covering of aromatic leaves, for his late dinner; and, because of an unforeseen delay on the trail, the roast had remained to the limit of the time necessary to bring it to perfection. He felt greatly the fatigue of the day's journey, and required

also a cup of the red wine, which had been presented to him by the factor, when he passed Fort Nisqually that morning. The wine was of a good vintage and he, himself, had already taken it from the hamper and set the bottle carefully on the flat granite rock selected for his table. Accordingly, while the refrain of his voice still lingered on the jungle, he lifted his skirt dexterously over the roots which converted an upturned hemlock trunk into an arm chair, and, seating himself comfortably, watched with anticipation the young Indian who bent to unearth the steaming head, and, removing the leaves, set the savory *pièce de résistance* on a wooden trencher before him.

Presently, having satisfied himself that the dish had lost little of its excellence by the delay, and that the wine was even of a finer flavor than a previous hurried test had promised, he lifted his eyes to his surroundings, and for the first time discovered a slight commotion in the shadows towards the branch. Evidently there was a new arrival, whom the Indians were crowding about and questioning with interest. Père La Framboise set down his cup and called a peremptory "Qui vive. Entrez."

Francesca, having picketed her horse, came forward into the firelight. "Clahowya," she said and added hastily, "Bon jour, mon père, bon jour."

The curé nodded his approval of the correction while he welcomed her. It was his custom to insist on the use of the French he had taught her. "But sit here, my daughter," he said after a moment;

"the long trail is a great tonic to sharpen the appetite, and this beef's-head is of an excellence. That boy Patcanim is going to be a chef worth the training."

Francesca took the offered seat on the end of a log opposite the priest, and, having served her, he replenished his own plate generously. "So, you have come back by that dangerous Pass of Snoqualmie; yet, my child" — he arrested his fork to look at her attentively — "you are as fresh as though you but stepped to Marie's door to give me a good-day. Come, how was it? You are alone, but Kam-i-ah-kan, of course, gave you escort through the mountains."

She shook her head. "It was Kam-i-ah-kan that I feared most, mon père; Kam-i-ah-kan and the young chief of the Walla Wallas, Flying Hawk, who came with his fine horses and many new blankets to buy me."

Père La Framboise started and closed his lips over an exclamation not exactly priestly. "That was a danger I had not considered," he added quickly. "But continue, my daughter, continue."

"We were at the summer camp near the Cedar River Pass, but the trail was watched; I could not escape that way. And so, while the young chief went to play a game with Kam-i-ah-kan, I rode down the Yakima to the plain, and across to the Snoqualmie trail. For two nights and all day my little horse travelled. He only stopped to breathe and eat. For two nights we were without sleep. But Skookum

has the stout heart. Mon père, he came to the crossing of Snoqualmie tired out, but I had only to speak to him and he was in that high water and swimming his best. At the lower crossing below the great fall, we found Baptiste."

There was a brief silence. The curé knew that Snoqualmie trail. His mind called up in swift succession the perils she had not named. He saw the child fighting her way through them, alone, groping often in darkness, always pursued, hard driven by the greater danger behind. "The Blessed Virgin be praised," he said at last. "It was she only who guarded your feet. My daughter, it was a miracle."

Francesca nodded her head gravely. "That is true, mon père, she brought me through. Skookum is swift but not like the brown horse of Flying Hawk. At the great council ground, when thirty fine horses ran in the race, the Walla Walla's horse was the best. He won everything."

"So," said the priest presently, "so you were at the great council ground. You saw all of those grand chiefs of the prairie, and doubtless Père Broullet and the curé of the Pend 'Oreilles with Père Pandosy, who were there to interpret for the Indians."

Oh, yes," she answered, "I saw them all, and while the Yakimas were near the council ground, Père Broullet often talked with me. He gave me this letter to bring to you, for then I did not expect to stay so long."

The curé took the letter, which she had drawn from

her breast, and sat turning it slowly in his hands, weighing it. It was of a bulkiness. Père Brouillet must have repeated the minute argument of the chiefs at the council, and explained exhaustively the progress of his labors among the difficult Walla Walla, Cayuses and Yakimas. It required time for perusal and he laid it, unopened, by his plate and gave his attention again to Frances.

"Yes, the holy fathers were all at the council," she said. "but the Indians had many of their own people to talk for them and explain what Monsieur le Governor wanted. There was the great chief Spokane Garry. While he was a boy a grand seigneur of the Hudson Bay Company sent him the long voyage to Canada to learn at a fine school. And Garry has the best French like you, mon père, and the fine English of a monseigneur. And there were Hal-hal-tlos-sot the Nez Percé, that the Bostons call Lawyer. He has matins and vespers every day to his camp, not like the holy fathers, but like the heret priest of the Bostons. And his Indian people are all good Catholics. And his Indian people are all good Catholics. But Monsieur le Governor is not so good with Hal-hal-tlos-sot."

"I have heard of Garry," said the old man, "fully, and a long time ago, while I lived a Coeur D'Alenes, I knew that Nez Percé, Lawyer. He was a remarkable boy, his memory was astonishing. Once he showed me a medal that was given his family by those Americans Lewis and Clark. He taught the advantage of his grandfather the old chief,

"The Bostons will come and they will stay; we cannot stop them, for they are stronger; but if we are friendly, if we divide with them, we may not lose everything."

"I have heard him," said Francesca quickly, "and the old chief was right. The Nez Percés were allowed to choose their reserve, and it is written on their real tablets as the sun shines and the water runs how it is not to be disturbed."

"And," the curé nodded his head slowly, "I have no fear. But, my daughter, what is Kam-i-ah-kan? I have heard he opposed the treaty from the beginning."

"That is true, mon père; he does not like the Bostons; he does not believe they will keep their promises. Mon Dieu, I am ashamed of all what I have seen."

She paused, then, in a lower tone told the story of the prospectors, and how she had seen Kam-i-ah-kan, that great Yakima, playing for the miserable foot. The priest listened attentively, and when she had finished he did not break the silence, but looked into the campfire, absently, with his lips set in a thin line and a furrow cleaving his brow.

After a moment Francesca said, "You must understand when Kam-i-ah-kan saw me, how the Boston blood in me was the stronger, he did not like me. All the time I was there I tried to please him but he never would talk to me; I could find out nothing. But I found in his camp the squaw Little Beaver. She is very old; she is my grandmother. At last,

the day I came away, she spoke, and I learned everything. Mon père, it is as you believe." Her voice struck its vibrating under-chord. She rose to her feet. "My father is a great officer. Mon père, he is that Commandant at the new garrison by Nisqually."

"As I expected," repeated the curé. "As I feared." He lifted his eyes from the fire and met Francesca's look. The expectation went out of her face; her lip trembled. "I understand," she said slowly. "You believe he is going to be ashamed of my Indian blood. But I think different. I know — so great a man can do nothing wrong."

"My child" — Père La Framboise's voice rang a dominant note — "your father should be proud of you; only a cur would refuse to acknowledge you. One may go far to find another like you; a daughter as good, as modest, as bright, as full of charm. But" — he paused, his glance wavered again to the fire, and, when he continued, his voice had lost its assurance — "since you went away things have changed; there is a new point to consider. I mean, Francesca, there is the Commandant's wife."

There was a silence. The priest looked thoughtfully into his cup. After a moment he raised it, still thoughtfully, and drank the remainder of the wine. "My child," he said and met the question in her eyes, "I am going a long journey. It cannot be delayed. A sea canoe is already engaged at the Snohomish village to take me to Victoria, where I expect to start with the brigade up the Fraser for

Montreal. It is possible I may be obliged to continue to Europe in order to secure the funds and workers, and particularly the sisterhood of French nuns that the missions so greatly need. This will delay me months. But, listen, my daughter. Go back to French Marie. Promise to put off your visit to the garrison until my return."

Francesca shook her head. "That is not possible. Have you forgotten how you, yourself, told me I was right to leave Marie's house? And consider, mon père. How can I wait so long, so patiently, when I know my father is so near? Mon père, always I have wanted him. Can you understand that? When I was very small if Marie was but cross, or too busy to speak to me, if I woke in the night and could not sleep, I cried for him. No matter what trouble I had, I knew, though I had never seen his face, my father could make it right, if only he would come. When I was older, and studied the books in your garden, mon père, I learned the lessons first of all, for him. I meant to surprise him. Even then I felt sometime he would come. And now he is here — at the garrison. To-morrow I shall be able to see him, but you ask me to wait. Mon père, mon père, I can not do that. It is not possible."

Her voice broke in a sobbing breath; all her body trembled. But still the priest persisted. "My child, listen. The wife of the Commandant is not like any lady you have seen. She is of the South, that part of America where blood counts most. She was taught from childhood to despise the mixed blood.

If she has never heard of you — she is so proud, so fine — to see you, suddenly, as you plan — will strike her like a blow."

"Mon père, I am not able to help that. I will try not to trouble her much; but I must see my father. He is Monsieur le Commandant." She lifted her head higher. "Do you forget that? A great man like that will know what to do. At once, in an instant he will see what is best."

As though this settled the matter she turned and walked in the direction of the place she had chosen for her night's lodging. Père La Framboise allowed her to go. But he sat for a long interval, looking off into the gloom where she had disappeared. "I am miserable," he told himself at last. "I am miserable. The child will suffer; she will suffer. But she is young and time — blunts the instrument. The discipline will be for the good of her soul, and in the end she will consent to bury her sorrows in Holy Church. And she, that sweet lady, may the Blessed Virgin spare her the truth, but I saw in her, even then, at the beginning, the mind, the ability for a Mother Superior."

After a while he took the letter from the table and read it carefully through. Some of the news was old, but, when he finished the final sheet, he turned back and went over it again.

"You comprehend, dear Ramon, since these treaties the heretic missionaries are looking this way again. It is necessary to suppress them, with the United States immigrants, at any cost. In the

question of the disputed territory it is our policy to stand by the Hudson Bay Company. And when this vast new country comes completely under our spiritual jurisdiction, and these tribes are converted to the Great Faith, I trust His Holiness will honor his servants by appointing for their exalted head that one, not only by birth and education eminently fitted, but whose executive ability, whose knowledge of and experience with the Indians, and whose diplomacy with both the Hudson Bay Company and the Americans prove him peculiarly suited to that high place."

Père La Framboise returned the letter to its envelope and put it carefully away in an inner pocket of his cassock. He leaned back in his seat and, crossing his hands on his ample front, looked slowly from figure to figure of his escort, stretched, already, in sleep around the fire. Then he lifted his glance to the summer stars and smiled. It was a broadening smile, and, beginning with his double chin, his head, his shoulders, and finally his whole great bulk rocked in noiseless laughter.

XIV

" I AM NOT THE MAN "

BARNABEE, waiting in front of the Commandant's quarters, struck the gravel with an impatient forefoot, and pulled at the hitching ring until the post shook, but his master still lingered in the balcony. The sun, low in the west, sifted between the honeysuckle vines like flour of gold. It powdered Lucia's blond head and turned the folds of her thin white gown into golden tissue. She rested on a rustic bench, the toe of one red slipper braced on the floor, the guitar on her crossed knee, her white ringed fingers sweeping the strings, and while she sang she looked with laughing, mocking eyes straight in her listener's face.

" With all my soul then let us part,
Since both are anxious to be free,
And I will send you home your heart
If you will send mine back to me.

" We've had some happy hours together,
But joy is ever on the wing, — "

Haworth rose from his seat and stalked down the veranda. She laughed noiselessly, her shoulders shaking, and allowed him to reach the steps; then, " Billy," she called softly, " Billy."
He turned. " Well? " he said.

" Are you afraid of the cougar that killed the garrison sheep last night or is it the fierce Klickitats, over the mountains? that you hurry away forgetting to tell me good-by."

He came back. " You know it is neither. I am afraid of nothing, nothing on earth — but you. I don't like that song, Miss Lucia."

" No? " She tipped her head, reading his face with a long side glance. " The Lieutenant taught it to me, and he wagered " — her lips bubbled merriment — " he wagered the finest, fur-lined beaded moccasins to be had at the Post, that I dared not sing it to you."

She laughed aloud, a low, sweet ripple, and touched the strings of the guitar. Then she paused and added with sudden gravity, " But, now he is gone, how can I hope to collect the debt? "

It was impossible to be angry with her; impossible to reason. He could only laugh with her, and when her hand coaxed from the instrument his favorite tune, he sank into his chair again and took up the measure.

" Then weep no more my lady, weep no more to-day,
For we'll sing one song of the old Kentucky home,"

and Barnabee tugged on, unheeded, at the hitching ring.

The Commandant, seated near the open window of the living-room, laid down his papers with a perplexed face. His wife put aside her needle-work, and, with her hands on the arms of her chair, leaned

forward listening to the harmony. Presently her glance moved to the officer and a question rose in her eyes. "This must not go on," she said at last, and started to her feet.

The Commandant bent his head in acquiescence. "Still," he modified, and a shade of humor softened his mouth, "we have learned that opposition, with Lucia, is not the surest way. After all she seemed to favor the Lieutenant more, when he was here, and, lately, when the Governor's secretary rides this way she is always glad to see him."

The lady walked the length of the room and returned. The guitar bridged an interlude and the voices rose again. "You do not seem to fully understand," she said. "It is that girl, Francesca. You remember I told you Colonel Haworth was greatly worried and asked Mrs. Stevens to use her influence with the boy, while we were at Olympia. It proved to be very little. The girl is said to be a handsome creature, and, no doubt, she is bright, as Father La Framboise says — for her conditions; but the taint is in the blood. Nothing can change that."

The Commandant rose. He stood for a moment holding the back of his chair, then moved to the open window.

His wife followed a step. "What makes it doubly shameful," she went on, "is that the young Canadian boatman, Baptiste, is fond of her. She might marry him — he is a deserving fellow — and live honestly, happily, but for William Haworth. He could hardly think of making her his wife, in the right way, and

spoil his whole life, but it may end in the farce of an Indian marriage. And, sooner or later, she would put her aside, as they all do, to marry a white woman."

There was a brief silence. The Commandant stood looking into the sunny square. His shoulders drooped forward a little, losing their military carriage. And she waited, regarding his broad back, holding her chin high, with a spot of color burning in either cheek.

"Malcolm," she said presently, and repeated, gently reproachful, "Malcolm. You know it hasn't been easy for me to say this. You know I have always avoided such discussion. It seemed useless. But to me these mock Indian marriages have been the tragedy of the Northwest. To me they have seemed terrible, unspeakably revolting. And now, when this William Haworth so — divides his time, how can I, how can you remain neutral?"

The Commandant turned. "I am not neutral." His voice deepened and shook. "You must not think that. On the other hand I would do anything in my power to influence young Haworth. His situation reminds me of the time I first came West on furlough, over the trail of Lewis and Clark. There was a man — I need not tell you his name — he was one of us — I thought a good deal of him — and I do not excuse him; but he was a rash young soldier, then, and the fault was partly Allison's. You see he knew the boy and he wagered, in the presence of several bold adventurers and traders, a pair of the best pistols west of the Rocky Mountains that he

dared not marry the daughter of the head chief of the Yakimas. The girl was approaching our little camp at the time, on her way to the tepees down the river. She came riding her fine pony, squaw-wise, her limbs wrapped in deerskin leggings, her berry filled baskets balanced evenly behind her, and her hair divided in two long braids on her shoulders. I can see her now, outlined against the pale sun-lighted plain. Those Yakimas were finely featured."

"And he married her?"

"Yes, he married her." The Commandant drew his hand across his eyes and again across his forehead.

"And won the pistols?"

"And won the pistols," he repeated.

"After the Indian rites, of course?"

"Yes," he admitted; "and, when his two years leave expired, he left her and joined his regiment beyond the Mississippi."

"To marry again among his own kind? A pure, refined woman?"

"The purest on earth." His eyes rested on his wife's face — lifted in infinite contempt of this man — and a great weariness came over his own. He turned back to the window.

"And she, his second wife, never knew?"

"No, she never knew. He always meant to tell her. He tried to — once — at the beginning, but she was too — spiritual — too spotless. And afterwards, when they were married, he found it was impossible. She never could have understood. It would have broken her heart."

There was a silence. He swung around. "Anna," and his voice took a vibrant undertone, "I know you can't see the shadow of excuse for him; but you have lived a good many years on the frontier and have seen conditions with your own eyes. You understand something about the privations and temptations of those early soldiers and pioneers. You will admit those Indian marriages sometimes saved whole settlements from massacre. They gave the Hudson Bay Company their strongest hold, for, as a rule, they respected the customs of the tribes, and acknowledged and reared their children. To me that seems the highest moral courage; that a man — having lapsed — " he paused and lifted his hand again with a quick sweeping of the eyes and forehead; moisture clung there in drops — " having lapsed — is able to acknowledge his mistake and — stay by his past."

"Yes." She met his look with fine, uncompromising eyes. "You are right. But such a man reaches his lowest level when he puts aside the Indian to set a white wife in her place. To me that is incomprehensible. Of course no refined woman, knowing the truth, would make such a marriage, but I do not see why, finding herself so deceived, as some have, she does not take immediate steps for a divorce."

The Commandant said no more. Presently he squared his shoulders and crossed the room and the hall beyond to the open front door. The lady moved in the opposite direction and stood calming herself at the window. The guitar, up the balcony, still

answered to the player's touch and Haworth's voice, blending with Lucia's, rose gayly on the air.

Then in that moment, while the officer halted on the threshold, a figure came slowly through the golden light from the direction of the main gateway. She sat her spotted pony squaw-wise, with skirts tucked in, limbs bound in deerskin leggins, a burden basket behind her balanced by a beautifully woven saddle-bag; but her hair, divided in two long and shining braids upon her shoulders, was too fair, her face too finely chiseled, the lips too red and delicately curved for any Indian's.

The song stopped. Lucia laid the instrument on the bench and rose. She came along the veranda, curious, smiling, eager for a diversion. And the girl on the horse watched her, answering her smile shyly, with a pleased wonder in her eyes. Then her glance moved to Haworth. The color rose through her tan and she said a soft "Clahowya."

Haworth, who had followed Lucia, nodded slightly in recognition of the salutation. A flush burned in his own cheek. He stopped in uncertainty, waiting apart. But the pony had halted at the foot of the steps and these two were instantly forgotten. The face at the window went unnoticed. The rider saw only the Commandant. There was no mistaking him, this tall, broad-chested, splendid officer of whom one heard everywhere. She swung herself lightly down from the saddle and came swiftly up to the door. Her hands were outstretched; a great brightness shone in her face.

" I am Francesca," she said, and her voice vibrated its contralto note. " I am Francesca."

The Commandant drew back. A grayness settled in his face. His glance wavered to the floor. At last his lips moved. " Francesca," he repeated. " Francesca. I -- have heard of -- you -- but -- " He straightened himself, one hand braced on the wall, and dragged his gaze to meet hers. " I do not remember -- having seen you -- before."

Her hands fell. " But yes, I most forget 'bout that, for sure. I was so small papoose, lak this " -- she measured the length of a month old infant between her palms -- " when Pére La Framboise found me by the Bitter Root trail. You doant hear 'bout that? No? How when he was ride from the Coeur D'Alene mission to St. Mary's, he found me with my dead mother in the snow? And he must tek me to French Marie; and she ees tek care me, and presen'ly, when she ees come the long trail with Pierre and little Baptiste, to Nisqually, she must bring me 'long."

She paused, but the Commandant was silent. " You un'stand," she went on, " how my mother ees try wait for you to come back, but the Blackfeet squaws were not good to her. They took her horse; she had so little blankets; often she was cold and hungry, for sure. And mebbe she was 'fraid I would not live and be strong. So, byme by she must go to Kam-i-ah-kan. But it was far to the co'ntry of the Yakimas; she was long tam on the way. And presen'ly there was me, so small papoose, to tek through those Bitter Root Mountains. Sacré, she

was not able. So Père La Framboise found her. And he has told me how when he ees stop his mule and deesmount, she was already dead, mon Dieu, yes; but when he was look inside the blanket, I must tek his big finger in my small hand and hold it fast. It ees lak he must break it to mek me let go."

She laughed softly, but her voice broke and her eyes filled with sudden mist. The Commandant fixed his glance beyond her, on the sun-lighted square. At last he said, "It is a mistake."

"No," she corrected with gentle insistence, "it ees not mistake. Kam-i-ah-kan knows for sure. When you went far from the co'ntry of the Blackfeet, to the big places of the Bostons, the Nez Perces brought word. When you rode with your soldiers to the new garrison in the co'ntry of the Navajos two Yakimas were there; and when you went hot on the trail of the Apache some Klickitats saw. But yes, all the Indians know you; they call you the White Wolf. So, when you ride 'gain through those Bitter Root Mountains, two runners come swift to Kam-i-ah-kan. He ees wait long before his tepee while you pass down the far side of Columbia Rivière and 'cross the Snake. And when you come back, close, close to the camp of the Yakimas, and turn 'way to these Mountains of Cascade, then Kam-i-ah-kan ees catch his strong horse Whirlwind, and ees ride hard to a high rock where you must pass. He ees watch you coming with your men, riding your gray horse. But no, it ees not mistake. Mebbe you doant know 'bout my mother ees dead so long tam in far

Skyue, but she was Singing Bird, that you lak best call Francesca."

Again the Commandant had nothing to say. His face had not lost its grayness and his glance again sought the floor. He knew that his wife had left her place at the window. Presently he felt that she was behind him, standing almost at his elbow. But her presence to this girl meant no more than a shadow. She spoke only to him.

"Mebbe you doant un'stand," she said after a moment. "I am not able spik so good English. I have only Monsieur Billee to teach me spik it right, and sometams I doant see him so mooch. But I have the grand French of Père La Framboise. But yes, I read the French books lak him, for sure. And he ees tell me when I stay but some little tam to my white father's house, I must know the English fine."

Still the Commandant was silent, but Francesca leaned towards him, eager, expectant, a look that was hunger yet not hunger, growing in her eyes. Haworth seeing it, dropped his chin on his breast and, turning his back, moved a few steps farther away.

"Père La Framboise," she said at last, "ees beli've my father, who ees so gre't man, ees 'shame of the Yakima blood. But I beli've diffrent. I know so gre't officier must go where his soldiers go; he must hurry when there ees fighting; he has not so mooch tam to think 'bout his familiee. But he can do nothing wrong. And I doant ever forget when you are able you will come back, and I try mek myself

white, merci, yes; all white, so when you see me it ees not pos'ble you are 'shame."

The Commandant stirred. It was the movement of a goaded animal, exhausted, ensnared. He lifted his glance and, for the first time, met Lucia's clear, cold gaze. It roused the executive in him. He pulled himself together and answered her. "It is all a trick; a trick of that viper Kam-i-ah-kan, fostered by that Jesuit La Framboise." He forced himself to meet Francesca's look. His brows contracted. "You understand. Go back." And his voice rang a menace. "Tell Kam-i-ah-kan *I — am not — the man.*"

Francesca stepped back slowly to the edge of the balcony. She drew herself erect and folded her arms. Her breath came in an almost sobbing lift and fall of the breast, but the softness, the entreaty went out of her face. Her mouth lost its curves; it settled in a thin line, and the animal brilliancy, the Klickitat rose in her eyes.

They stood so, facing each other a brief interval, then, with her look still fastened on the Commandant, she moved slowly backward down the steps. At the last her glance wavered to Haworth, who stood, non-committal, with his shoulders turned, and reproach, despair welled in her face. Her lip quivered. But the next instant the Yakima rose dominant and the transformation grew. When her feet touched the ground she caught up her trailing bridle and swung lightly on her horse. And Skookum, stung by an unaccustomed blow, broke into quick motion.

XV

THE EXPLANATION

IT was Lucia who broke the strained silence. Her eyes still rested on a clump of oaks towards the gateway where Francesca had disappeared, and her voice had the indistinctness of one speaking in another room. "Those stones were emeralds, but I never saw anything so barbarous, so unique. Did you notice that necklace?"

She turned with the slight lift and dip of her shoulders that seemed to reject a weight, and, with a side glance from her father to her mother, looked directly at Haworth. He went over and picked up his hat from a bench and came back. "No, Miss Lucia, I don't remember any necklace. Good by, I'll leave my guitar as you wished. Madame, good afternoon. Good by, sir."

The officer bowed, but Anna detained the boy. "Wait," she said, and moved from the threshold to the Commandant's side. "It is necessary that we explain this unfortunate mistake. Malcolm" — she laid her hand on his arm and looked up, but from her position, he was so much taller, she was not able to clearly see his face — "you should have explained it to her. The child was not to blame. You were needlessly hard."

She paused a moment, but the Commandant had nothing to say and she went on, at first addressing young Haworth, then allowing her eyes to rest on her daughter's face. "We were talking about the man, who must have been Francesca's father, and his miserable Indian marriage just before she came. It happened in those early days when your father made his first visit to the upper Columbia. The man was one of his party, a brave soldier, and his comrade and friend; it isn't strange that the Indians, after all these years, should confuse their identity. The marriage was disgraceful, but the man was very young and there were extenuating circumstances. He must have bitterly regretted it; it probably marred his whole life. But, when we find him, and let him know of Francesca, he will doubtless do all he can for her."

"I hope so," Haworth answered, "I hope so. She deserves it. She's proud and fine, madame; white as a — nun. I've known her for years; nearly all my life. I — think a lot of her. And I'm ashamed of myself; I want to say that. I might have smoothed — things — a little for her, just now, but I stood like a coward and let her go, unrecognized, without a word."

He went down the steps, and untying his horse, mounted and rode toward the gates. After a moment Lucia walked to the end of the veranda and picked up the guitar. The Commandant drew his hand across his eyes and again, slowly, across his forehead and turned back into the hall.

Anna followed. "It was miserable," she said in

a lower tone, laying her hand again on his sleeve; "and doubly unfortunate that Lucia should have witnessed it. But don't allow it to trouble you too much, Malcolm. The boy, of course, fully understood the mistake. You noticed the interest he betrayed; there isn't a doubt he rode to overtake her; and Malcolm, you see the necessity to take steps at once to end his attentions to Lucia."

"I will speak to him," said the Commandant.

"And you will do what you can to find Francesca's father? I suppose he never thought of a possible child?"

"No. No. That is the clearest proof of his irresponsibility. But if he had known —" for the first time the officer met his wife's look — "it would have made — a difference."

"You mean about his second marriage. Still, you will write. It is unavoidable. You will make inquiries for him, to let him know about Francesca."

"I will do what I can." He walked on, with his usual firm tread, to his private office, and went in and closed the door.

Barnabee shook himself, and, feeling the gravelly soil of Nisqually plains underfoot, broke into a light gallop. Eastward, over the timber belt, Mt. Rainier caught the rose glow of a departed sun, and the slow Northern twilight drew her amethyst curtains close. A final sentry saluted from his rifle pit and the garri-son became a distant blemish on the solitudes. Then the trading post detached from its background of blue-black forest, and Haworth drew his rein at the

intersection of a cross track. Far up this trail, avoiding the Post, another rider moved, a speeding shadow, from the still shade of an oak clump to be lost directly in a group of firs. The young man turned his horse that way.

After a while the prairie dipped and the trail entered a thick fringe of forest bordering a long lake. The thoroughbred slackened his pace, ears playing suspiciously, starting at a sprinkle of gravel or the snapping of a twig, but the familiar assurance of his master's whistle, for which he listened, did not come. Presently he stopped, head up, ears erect, and, renewing his step gently, halted again. Then the spotted pony, jaded, and still wet from hard going, came through the trees the length of his picket rope.

Haworth dismounted and, tying his horse, pushed between low boughs to the shore of the lake. He stumbled on Shookum's saddle, with the Yakima bag and basket beside it; then, another step, he came upon Francesca.

She was lying on the ground, with her face buried in her arm. The gay handkerchief was thrown aside, and her hair fell in disorder, cloaking her shoulders, her waist, her thighs. Under it her whole frame shook in voiceless anguish.

"Francesca," he said. "Oh, Francesca!"

She started, rising to her knees, her hands grasping uprooted fragments of moss, and looked at him. It was as though, in that instant, he saw into the abyss of her despair. He understood, suddenly, how

incurable was the hurt he himself had dealt her; the appalling magnitude of his own part.

"Francesca," he repeated. "Francesca, I was a coward. I know you despise me; I can't ever forgive myself; but I've got to tell you how sorry I am."

She rose slowly to her feet, still clenching and relaxing her hands, her body quivering as though she felt the repeated lashing of a scourge. "You come here," she said at last, and her voice took its deepest note; "you can speak to me now, 'lone by the trees, where no one can leesten, but there to the garrison — it ees diff runt."

She paused, but Haworth had no answer. The bank broke sharply, and he stood looking into the lake, twisting his riding whip, in his face immeasurable self-abasement. It was as though he saw himself, his weakness, smallness, clearly mirrored in those crystal depths.

"I un'stand. Sacré, yes, I un'stand. But leesten. We doant talk some more when we come by the trail; we doant eat the fine lunch of pheasant to the spring. If you see, sometams, that half-breed girl, Francesca, it ees mooch best you doant speak to her; it ees mooch best you doant stop her."

"But," he stammered, "I said — what I could — — afterwards; I praised you — blamed myself — when you were gone."

"So?" A momentary light leaped in her face. "But I have mek so gre't mistake. Mon Dieu, Billee, I have mek so gre't — mistake." Her voice broke in a sob and vibrated on. "Sometams, on the

long trail, I have beli've lak Père La Framboise; I'm mooch 'fraid my father doant want me; how he ees going be 'shame'. But I doant ever think that 'bout you, Billee; for sure, no."

Haworth's glance fell again to the depths below.

"I be'n so proud," and her voice touched its softest contralto key. "I feel all tam so grand because you and Père La Framboise tell me I'm so smart; so white. I have not dance' so mooch those French boys; they do not kiss me lak those girls who mek fun for them, sometams, to Marie's cabane. I doant let Baptiste, who ees lak my brother, kiss me. No man has touch' me — but you."

Haworth understood. She referred to that parting at the spring, and she had given it a significance he had not meant. He thought swiftly, for the first time seeing his attitude from her standpoint. Had he not singled her out, always, avoiding the other settlement girls? Had he not made her his comrade; sought her, every idle hour, in her neighborhood? Had he not defied public opinion, his father, the Governor's wife, for her? Once, in a fit of anger at the injustice done her, he had all but determined to marry her. It was then, while he hovered on the brink of that gulf, Lucia came.

Francesca waited, watching him in speechless appeal. He cast about for some word to bridge the silence, but the one word his pity, manliness, remorse urged him to say, would not out. The opportunity passed.

Her face slowly hardened. "And you," she said at last, "you — all tam laugh."

"No. No, Francesca." He moved a step towards her, but, lifting his eyes from the lake to her face, he stopped.

He was not afraid. He was accustomed to see the inflammable voyageurs let loose their primal passions; once down in the Spanish country he had watched a fine Señor in a burst of rage; but never, in all his eventful young life, had he met a great anger like this. She seemed suddenly taller. Her eyes fixed his; her body was tense with the litheness of a beautiful animal about to spring. An indefinable something that was light yet not light, heat yet not heat, seemed to emanate from and envelop her. To draw nearer, to come within that circle was to be stricken. Involuntarily he fell back.

"It ees best you doant speak some more. I am not so mooch lak my mother that first Francesca. Go." She raised her arm with a gesture towards the trail. "Go," she repeated with unanswerable decision; and she added as he stumbled to his horse, "*Mon Dieu, I am 'shame' to be while !*"

XVI

THE SUBTLETY OF THE YAKIMA

THE trail stretched a dim and wavering streak down vistas of pale alder, through tangles of vine-maple and balsam into the heart of Nisqually bottom. Between the crowding trunks red-stemmed madronas pushed up and shook their stiff and polished leaves; rhododendrons spread palm-like branches and unfolded a tropical bloom; ferns lifted giant plumes; honeysuckle and sweetbrier climbed the intricate lattice of branches and always, above this interlining of lighter green, billowed the perpetual canopy of hemlock and fir. Cones and needles were underfoot. Sometimes a limb, grown too stout to put aside, held the way, or the barbed and poisonous stick of a devil's-club caught Francesca's sleeve. In places, where a fallen monarch barred the track, she was forced to dismount, while Skookum, when he could, hurled himself at the barricade and scrambled over; where he must, freed of the saddle, he flattened himself and wormed beneath.

Finally the trail terminated in a small open on the bank of the river a few miles from its mouth. The Nisqually widened there and was broken mid-channel by a shallow, where rotting logs, grounded in ancient

freshets, formed a miniature archipelago and nourished diminutive forests of cedar or hemlock. Presently an object, carrying a front like the top of a wrecked fir, swung around an upper bend and drifted down stream. It was Leschi's fishing canoe screened in green boughs. The tyee, stripped to the waist, crouched in this floating lair, his spear in his grasp, his powerful arm tense and his piercing eyes fixed on the swift current.

Francesca picketed the pony and seated herself on the bank to wait. A jay swung past, a flash of blue in the sun; another balanced insolently on a near bough and called a mocking challenge, and from the meshes of a cedar, overhanging the stream, a kingfisher, patient angler, kept watch.

Suddenly Leschi sprang erect and struck a quick blow. A startled mallard whirled out of the reeds; another; followed by a butterball, the sun glinting from his white breast. The tyee drew his spear, dropping it in the bottom of the canoe, and tossed the catch, a large silver salmon, into the mesh of twigs in the bow. He had not seemed to see Francesca, but now he settled to his knees and, lifting a paddle, turned the craft in her direction.

She rose to her feet. "Clahowya, Leschi, hyas tyee," she called. "Clahowya."

"Clahowya, Francesca. Clahowya. Clahowya." He intoned the salutation with great deliberateness, but he came swiftly to the bank, and, folding an old blue army coat, which he had bartered of a soldier, around him, he stepped from the canoe. Among the

squat coast tribes he was a tall Indian; he inherited his height, with a dignity of presence, from a Yakima mother.

After a moment he said, "You come the long trail; many suns you ride from the lodges of Kam-i-ah-han."

"Nawitka." And she added in the Nisqually's language, "But I bring no presents. In the country of the Yakima a woman's place is small. She has no voice. When Kam-i-ah-kan sends gifts to a great chief he chooses a man to carry them."

"The messenger came. The beaded belt of the great Yakima he brought, and in it Kam-i-ah-kan's strong knife. He said, 'Kam-i-ah-kan's heart is warm; he does not wish to see the Nisquallies destroyed.'"

"But," Francesca answered slowly, "when the great Yakima heard of the council at Medicine Creek, when he heard how Tyee Leschi was the first to set his mark on the Governor's treaty, to give away the land of his people, his heart was heavy; then was the heart of Kam-i-ah-kan cold."

"Wake (No), Francesca, wake." The words struggled in Leschi's throat; they choked. He turned and strode across the small open, and coming back, strode again. Finally he stopped before her. "I did not see straight; I do not know how my mark came on the treaty. I did not understand it; there were many people and there was much hurry."

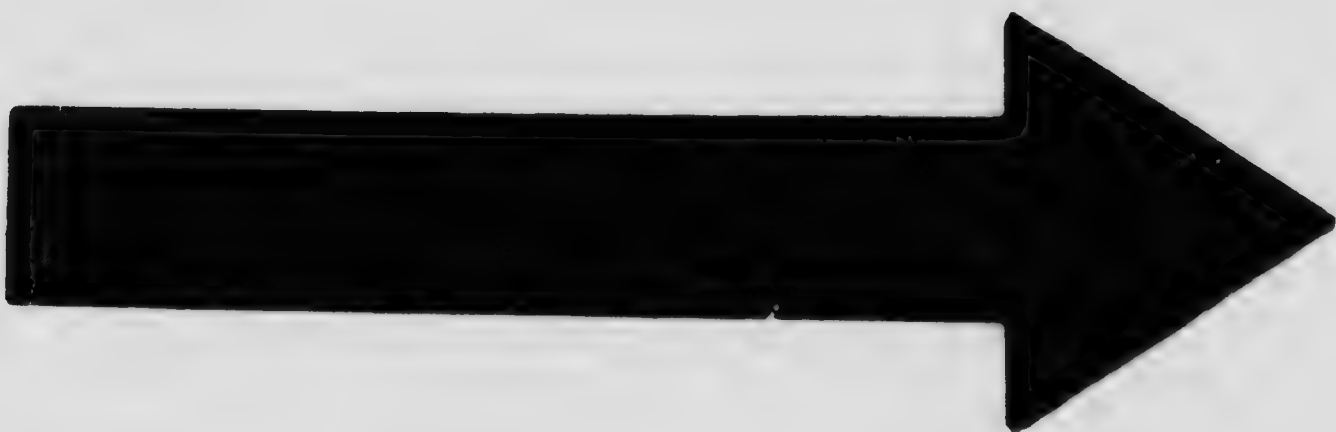
"I was by the Walla Walla when the Indians of the plains gathered in council; like the salmon at the

time of the great run they were many; you could not count them. But Kam-i-ah-kan did not come when the Governor called; he stayed far off." She paused weighing the effect of her words on the Nisqually. "When the head chiefs spoke the great Yakima was not there to lead the talking; his people had no voice. But, when he knew how the young chiefs listened to the Bostons, and to Hal-hal-tlos-sot the Nez Perce his heart was hot; then his voice, like the clouds hot with thunder, was heard through the lodges; then Kam-i-ah-kan rode to the council."

Leschi moved a restless step; his heavy brows beetled and gloomed. "He talked long and well," Francesca went on, still watching the effect of her words, "but when he had finished it was as though he had not spoken. All the proud tyees of the Columbia, together with the Nez Perce and the head of the Spokanes, set their marks on the treaties; and when Kam-i-ah-kan saw how Yellow Serpent, the Walla Walla, and Flying Hawk, who is first among the young war chiefs, wrote on the paper his mighty heart grew sick. Then rose the great Yakima and put his cross on the treaty to give away the country of his people."

Leschi took another turn across the open, stumbling a little, blind with passion. Francesca followed a step. "What could he do?" she added. "No one would listen to him. He was alone."

Leschi came back and stood before her. "I have sent word to Kam-i-ah-kan," he said; "twice



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



1.50

1.56

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1.71

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I have sent word. But now I will go. The long trail I will go to the lodges of the Yakima. I, Leschi, will tell him how the chiefs of the salt water have opened their eyes. I will tell him how we wanted the presents the Bostons promised; how we wanted the warm blankets for our people before the winter rains; how we wanted the schools for our children that they might learn to be wise and strong like the whites; how we wanted the help of the soldiers and the big fire canoe of the Bostons to drive back the fierce Haidas and Nootkas, who come down in their war canoes at the time of the salmon run. I will tell how all these things the Bostons promised; how we believed they wished only to share our land, but it is not so. I will show how the presents have not come, yet they tell us to move to that mean land by the Puyallup, where sometimes the river comes high over the lodges, and sometimes there is not enough water for the big canoes to go to the fishing. I will show how the Bostons want everything and give nothing. Yes, I, Leschi the Nisqually, will go; I will speak that the great Yakima may understand."

"In the tepee of Kam-i-ah-kan the great Nisqually will sleep warm," Francesca answered slowly. "The young chiefs of the Columbia will listen to his words. They know the Bostons promise much and do not keep their word. They remember the treaties with anger and shame."

Leschi strode once more across the open. Francesca waited. When he came back she said, still slowly, weighing him, compelling his understanding:

"There will be another council. When the great Nisqually comes home through the mountains he will call together all the chiefs of the big salt water. The Skykomish, the Quilcene will come, the Clallam; and even the fierce Nootka, who hates the Bostons and is afraid of their fire canoe, will be on Leschi's side."

The Nisqually grasped the suggestion. "We will go, si-ah, to the many islands," he answered quickly. "To the running waters of the Skagit, to the Nootsack and the high places of Che-am we will go. And I, Leschi, will make the hy-as potlatch, that the tyees may listen and understand."

Francesca was silent. She turned her face a little and looked off across the sunlit river. Its music, striking a minor chord, filled an interlude. The chief's face settled in a mask through which his eyes flamed escaping heat. Finally he started to his canoe.

Francesca followed. She lifted the salmon and a basket of clams from the bow, and, when he had embarked to resume his occupation, mid-stream, she made a circle of stones on the bank, inside of which she kindled a fire. After a while she poured the clams from the basket and filled it with water, which she heated by dropping in the hot rocks. When it reached the boiling point she put the salmon in, and placed the clams on flat stones to roast before the coals.

Apparently Leschi had forgotten her, but she knew that the moment she signalled the canoe would point shoreward again, to the open. She knew also that the

Nisqually would make that visit to Kam-i-ah-kan, and that, when he returned, his great sea canoe would surely sail northward to gather many strong tribes in council.

XVII

A REPULSE

BALDY, the head pack horse, snatched a mouthful of tender leaves, then sauntered through a shallow stream, dropping his muzzle to skim the surface, and stopped under some alders on the farther bank to crop the long grass. The second horse crowded in and the loads rubbed. Haworth started. He felt in his pocket for a pebble and threw it, touching the leader smartly on the flank. Baldy sprang, the other horse fell into line, and, as Barnabee paced into the brook, his master picked up a thread of tune. But his whistle had lost spirit; it broke off; his bridle hand sank on the pommel; the reins sagged; his gaze returned to that bit of the trail framed by the thoroughbred's ears.

The next time it was rapid hoofbeats behind that roused him. He looked back to the great fir trunk he had just turned, and saw first the head of the gray charger and then the Commandant. The young man shouted to his train and rode quickly forward to hold the animals in a wider place while the officer passed, but abreast of Haworth he drew his horse in.

"Good-morning," he said with his usual courteous ease. "And thanks to my good fortune your way lies with mine. You can direct me, I'm sure, to a short

cut to the French settlement I've been watching for, yet seem to have missed."

"The cut is there, just beyond my horses," and the boy added simply, "but you won't find Francesca at French Marie's."

The Commandant was silent. His brows contracted a little and his searching eyes probed the boy through. "She went away last spring," Haworth explained, "when Baptiste pressed her to marry him. I met her starting for the Cedar River trail through the mountains. She wanted to ask Kam-i-ah-kan about her father, and she had just come back — that day — at the garrison." He paused, flushing, and looked off down the trail. "After that there was nowhere else for her to go but to the Nisqually village."

"Then I am going the opposite direction; away from her. You saved me a long and needless ride. But I would like to say" — the charger wheeled and the Commandant paused to draw him down with an iron grasp — "I would like to say that I've regretted speaking to her, as I did, that day. I was needlessly hard I admit, as my wife said, but she — Francesca — took me unawares, and I failed to see until afterwards how easy, how natural it was she should make the mistake. I am anxious to explain this to her, and, since it may be a long time before her father — can be informed" — his voice deepened yet rang slightly, and, meeting the boy's look squarely, a sort of challenge sprang from the depths of his eyes — "I would like to make some

arrangement for her; place her in some kind of shelter — home. I have thought ” — his tone softened and he added slowly — “ that you — might be able to help me in this.”

Haworth shook his head. “ I’d like to, but — ” He paused and the flush again swept his face. “ It’s a shame, but there isn’t a woman I know who would take her in.”

“ From what Father La Framboise told us she must be exceptionally bright; and she is undeniably handsome. If — some one — ” again the Commandant’s eyes probed the boy — “ should take her away, to a place where she isn’t known, and dress her like an American woman, no one would suspect her Indian blood. She would pass in any eastern city for a Spanish American, or perhaps I should say French. Yes, French-American. She has the vivacity and, according to the Jesuit, speaks the language fluently.”

There was a long pause, then Haworth broke out. “ I know what you mean, sir; others have hinted it, but it isn’t the way — you think. I’m fond of Francesca; and I’m sorry for her. I’ve been so sorry, sometimes, that I could have married her just to show those fine, wrong-minded gossips how little I value their opinion; but now — it’s too late. She never will forgive my — part — that day at the garrison. Besides, sir ” — and the flush burned hotter in his face — “ I love your daughter.”

Barnabee started, but Haworth brought him around to wait for the Commandant’s reply. It did not come and the boy added, “ I haven’t spoken to her — in

that way — yet, sir; but I'm going to the first opportunity."

"Well, I thank you for the warning." For an instant the officer's lips suggested a smile, then his brows contracted and he went on with unmistakable decision, "But it's only fair to you to tell you I shall do all I can to prevent that opportunity. First, because Lucia is too young; you both are too young to form a permanent attachment; at twenty-one a man rarely is attracted by the same personality that draws him at thirty; and second, before a man asks a woman to marry him he should be reasonably sure of a business career, or else have some position to offer the one who so honors him. I'm sorry. Personally I like you, but, until you have one or the other to show, I must ask you to discontinue your visits to the garrison."

He held out his hand, but the young man disregarded it, and, his horse wheeling in, the officer gave him rein, turning back toward the Nisqually. Haworth rode on after the lagging pack animals. Presently, when his blood had cooled, he went over the conversation, weighing the Commandant's attitude. "But," he told himself, "my father has both position and a business career, backed by influence and family; he will do everything in his power to advance me. The Commandant should know it."

Before the officer reached the village his trail entered an old burn. New growths of alder and hazel began to cast a light shade; infant hemlocks sprang from charred logs; fern and salal hastened

to clothe fire stripped skeletons; but nothing was as insistent as the blackberry; its vines tangled, matted, rioted everywhere; even in the edge of the open they trailed, festooned from the boughs of the living trees.

Some Indian girls were gathering the ripe fruit. They looked up, answering the Commandant's salutation with a pleasant "Clahowya," and waited, watching him, while he passed. Beyond them the spotted pony browsed the length of his lariat, and farther still, where the trail re-entered the green timber, Francesca stood beside her brimming baskets.

Suddenly she caught up a few of the berries, and crushing them in her hands, dropped the pulp and drew her juice stained fingers down her face, leaving on either cheek three broad red stripes. Then, as the Commandant approached, she lifted her head high and looked at him.

He stopped his horse, but, meeting that look, the "Good-morning" on his lips died. He had expected to find her unhappy yet gentle, pliable, eager to listen, quick to appreciate the benefits he had come to offer; but since that day at the garrison she seemed to have greatly changed.

He took his hat in his bridle hand and wiped the moisture from his forehead. "The sun shines hot in this burn," he said.

But Francesca was silent.

He dismounted and, slipping his bridle over a stout, snagged limb, turned to her again. He had supposed her eyes were brown like her Indian mother's,

but now, looking into their midnight depths, he saw gray tones. They disconcerted him. His glance fell to the braid on her shoulder and for the first time also he noticed the chestnut shading through her hair. "I came this way to find you," he said at last. "I want to talk to you. Come down the trail a little farther, here where it is cooler."

"I can listen here," Francesca replied in the Chinook language. "I do not speak the English, but, if you like to use the Yakima better, I can understand."

The Commandant frowned. "You can understand the English well enough, and you seemed able to speak it, and anxious to learn it better, that day you came to the garrison. But I want to explain things I should have told you then, if you hadn't taken me so by surprise. It wasn't strange that you made that mistake. I was there near the Yakima, when your father married Kam-i-ah-kan's sister. He was about my age and height." He paused a moment, turning his face to look off through the trees. "We were close friends. But I never knew he had a daughter; I doubt he, himself, ever knew of you. I — ha — en't heard — from him, in years, and if he left the army, as he talked of doing, it may be a long time before we can find a clue. Until you do hear from him I — want to do all I can for you."

There was a silence. He turned and again met her look. Her eyes hardened; the gray in them grew metallic, electrical; they never wavered from his face. "Of course," he went on, "it is impossible for you to stay at the Nisqually village. You must find

it squalid now, though you are able to spend most of the time out of doors, but it will be insufferable when the rainy season comes. And I have just heard why you left the French settlement. If you know of no one else, some woman who could take your foster mother, Marie's, place, I will arrange to send you to Superintendent Palmer's school, in Oregon. He and his teachers would be greatly interested in you."

Francesca nodded slowly. "He told me about the school when I saw him with the Governor by the Walla Walla; but I cannot go."

"Certainly not alone; but I will make arrangements for you to join the first party going down the Cowlitz to the lower Columbia. It seems altogether the best plan, and later, when there is an opportunity to send you East, by way of Panama, or perhaps in care of some sea captain's wife around Cape Horn, I want to place you in an excellent girls' school I know of in New York."

"Halo," replied Francesca, "Halo." And she added still in Chinook, "I will stay here."

She started, then, to her pony, and, bringing him close to her filled baskets, began to load him in haste. The Commandant stood watching her. Soldiers called him a man of iron nerve; a sure man in an emergency; one quick to throw himself in the balance and swing his cause; but he halted, baffled, before this slim, brown girl; looking into her tragic, barbarously stained face he was like one come to a blind wall. He turned, defeated, to his horse.

XVIII

THE DIVERSIONS OF LUCIA

LUCIA stopped her horse by a clump of oaks, and laughing softly, watched Trumpeter, far off, riderless, finish the distance to the garrison gates. Then she turned and sent a swift glance backward over the plain, past the trading post, to the line of forest that enclosed American Lake. Barnabee was coming. His master had seen her signal, the two twigs laid one behind the other in the trail, and pointing the way she had taken.

She slipped from her saddle and, breaking two sprigs from the branch above her, placed them in the same way, but pointing out of the trail, through the oaks. Then she led her horse into the clump, on into a thicker growth of firs where she tied him. A few yards farther the ground dipped sharply, holding a small lake like a half-filled bowl. She tucked the skirt of her long green habit under her arm, and, moving to the brink, stood like Narcissus, a green velvet cap on her blond head, regarding herself in the mirrored surface below.

In a little while Barnabee's tramp cut the stillness. She turned her face listening, while he came under the oaks and stopped. She knew Haworth was out of the saddle; she heard the quick swish of boughs, his

"Steady, Barnabee, steady; whoa now." And in another moment the boy pushed through the remaining branches and caught both her hands in his own. "It isn't honorable, Miss Lucia; I'm ashamed of myself, but I had to come."

"Oh," she said and drew back her hands, "I was so afraid you wouldn't see the twigs were so small. I dared not leave bigger ones. It's unbearable, Billy. If I ride the shortest mile outside the stockade I must have that old grenadier Walters trailing at my heels. But I saw you through the trees as we skimmed American Lake to take the Harbor road home, and" — the merriment bubbled to her lips — "I taught him a lesson; yes, I did."

She seated herself on the bank and drew in her skirt making room for Haworth beside her. "It was this way," she explained. "I had led him a long chase and knew he was fuming to be back to the barracks a time for mess, twice he had reminded me, but he wouldn't ride on and leave me to follow as I suggested. So, when we reached that bit of cedar swamp on the Harbor road where the syringa is abloom, I insisted I must have some. He tore himself from the saddle in a desperate hurry and pushed into the tangle to get it for me. I held his horse." She paused, meeting her listener's look with the laughter brimming in her eyes. "And he had only time to reach the syringa, and stop waist-deep in brush to open his pocket knife, when I gave Trumpeter a sharp cut that sent him off to the garrison, while El Capitan carried me back towards American Lake."

She finished with a peal of merriment, her hands embracing her knees, her whole charming figure undulating delight; and Haworth threw back his head and echoed her laugh, clapping his palms.

"But, Miss Lucia," he said with sudden gravity, "what will the Commandant think?"

"I don't know; but I'd love" — her laughter pealed again — "I'd love — this moment — to — see Walters."

"Your father didn't exact any promise," said the boy presently, "but that makes it all the more a question of honor. He trusted me."

"Well, what is to end his trusting you? Walters — poor Walters — will plod straight on the shortest way home; he won't be there for an hour, and I doubt he had that glimpse of you up the branch by the lake. But, since you speak of promises, Billy, I give you warning. Mother is going to have a talk with you the first opportunity. I overheard her telling father. She's going to ask you, on your honor, to promise not to meet me, or, if you find yourself in the same company, to show me no special attention. You had better avoid her, Billy. You are the kind of boy to promise, and after that, nothing — wild horses, Kam-i-ah-kan's Klickitats, nothing on earth — can force you to break your foolish word."

"Perhaps you are right." He paused, watching her face, smiling a little with a shake of his head. "I don't like intrigue and I have my pride. But I wish, Miss Lucia, I wish I hadn't worn out my welcome at the garrison so soon."

Lucia flashed him the unusual direct look of her wide open eyes. "Haven't you thought out the real trouble yet? Don't you know mother was prejudiced almost at the beginning, about that girl Francesca?"

The boy rose and stood looking over the lake. The water pulsed gently, reflecting every opal tint from the subdued west. Evening was near. "No," he replied at last. "No. But I see now. It puts some things the Commandant said to me, that day up the trail, in a different light. It's a shame; I've tried my best to make the situation clear. Miss Lucia, you understand, surely. I've known Francesca all my life. She was the best comrade I ever had. She taught me all I know about a canoe; we fished together, and she showed me how to wing a pheasant with an arrow. She made the point herself, out of a bit of agate, and the truest bow I ever handled. She taught me how to snare a grouse and a hundred other things a small boy likes to learn. Looking back I see the debt was on my side. I gave her little but my company. Often I laughed, openly, at her English, which I seldom bothered to correct, but, beyond using the French Father La Framboise taught her, for the rest of that day, she never retaliated. And no one censured me — about her — until I came back from my two years of study with the priests at Monterey. I was growing a big fellow, then, and sometimes, when the afternoon was too hot for heavy exercise, we found a place in the shade and I read to her. She liked that. I had a copy of 'The Lady of the Lake' that

interested her immensely. It was wonderful how, with her poor English, she caught the meaning of a verse, better often than I did. It was then my father began to object. But I couldn't cast her off. And, even you, Miss Lucia, couldn't help liking her if you knew her. You would blame me for standing like a coward, as I did that day at the garrison. I can't forgive myself for that. As long as I live I can't forgive myself. You see I knew what it was costing her."

"Did you believe her?" asked Lucia.

"I believed in her, yes. I don't know what — to think — but she's honest; clear as day. And she's the kind to take things hard. I knew how her heart was set on finding her father."

Haworth's glance rested again on the lake. Close in, across the shadows thrown by the firs, one big star cast a brilliant wake. "Under the circumstances," he added with a catch in his voice, "if Francesca is the real objection, I had better not see you — any more."

Lucia rose. She stood a silent moment also watching the trail of the star; then, "I thought you liked me, Billy," she said.

"Liked?" He paused to steady his voice and caught the swift side glance she gave him. "Like isn't the word."

"Then wait, Billy, wait, please don't say it." She held up her hand in protest, with another swift look, half daring, half mocking, but altogether alluring. "Remember it's a question of honor."

She turned her face from him, waiting, while the amusement dimpled her mouth; but to her surprise Haworth was silent. Directly he pushed through the branches to search in the gloom for El Capitan's halter. When he found it and untied the hitch around the tree, she stood ready to be put up. And at the light pressure of her foot on his palm, the touch of her hand on his shoulder, his whole frame shook. "Never mind the word, now," he said unevenly. "It's all right if you care something for me; and you do care, you must, to meet me like this — in spite of everything."

"As to that, Billy, since it's the fashion to be honest, I'm afraid I came for love of the adventure. It's awfully dull at the barracks with the Decatur gone; and besides it was such a diversion to discipline Walters."

Haworth untied his own horse and silently led the way out of the wood. She watched him, her shoulders shaking, in noiseless laughter. Then, as they reached the clump of oaks, "Look, Billy," she cried, "they are bringing horses out of the stockade; three of them and lanterns — lanterns, an evening like this. Walters has reached the barracks, or else — Trumpeter created a scare and started the search. I didn't think of that. Father knows nothing can unhorse Walters unless he is hurt. I'll have to tell you good-by here, Billy; but wouldn't it be fun to creep up in the face of those lights and detour around to the other gate, and leave them hunting? An hour later I'd try it."

She rode out from the shadow of the oaks, but presently, while Haworth held his horse in, watching her, she turned and cantered back. "I forgot to say, Billy, I'll contrive to let you know how it ends. Whoa, Capitan, whoa there. And" — she bent a little towards the boy and her voice took a lower key — "it's possible sometime, I may want you to say — *that word.*"

She was away instantly, before Haworth could answer, and, after a while, when she had met one of the horsemen, who extinguished his light and turned back to the garrison in her company, Barnabee sprang from the shade, and, falling into his long stride, quickly covered the plain towards the trading post.

XIX

THE GUITAR FROM QUEBEC

THE flood tide flowing into the mouth of the Nisqually formed a backwater easing the current, and Baptiste propelled his light canoe with an even reach and dip that hardly tightened the cords in his powerful arms. The forest was so still that the swish, drip, swish multiplied on every bluff as from a score of paddles. Sometimes his voice broke out, surprising the solitudes, in his favorite chanson.

Finally he came abreast of a cape enclosing a little cove and his stroke fell slower. Looking across the fallen, half-submerged cedar that terminated the point, he had discovered a small canoe, drawn up under the dense growth of salmonberry bushes that fringed the shore; and presently, when he had rounded the snag, on a bit of cleared bank above the craft he saw Francesca. A large basket stood on the ground beside her, and she carried another suspended between her shoulders by the broad, woven forehead strap. Both receptacles, as well as the smaller picking measure in her hand, were full of the big, luscious, pale orange fruit."

"Clahowya, Francesca, bo'jour; hello dare," he shouted, and dipped a sweeping stroke as though he aimed to gather the whole Nisqually on his paddle.

"Clahowya, Paptiste," she answered; and while he crossed the cove she lowered the basket from her shoulders and, setting it in her canoe, placed the others beside it; then she stood waiting. Her eyes fell from the voyageur to a green object in the bow.

"So," he cried, "so ma leetle gal ees come pick dose salmonberry; dat ees good. A'm all tam mooch 'fraid I doan' fin' you by Leschi's camp; den dose sacré Injuns ees goin' break dis gran' instrumen', for sure, before dey give it to you." The side of his canoe grazed 'iers and nosed the landing. He sprang out. "But ya-as," he went on, and drew the bow high, "the brigade ees arrive an' mo'sieur ees send dis fine present of guitah dat he ees order from Kebec."

He lifted the green bag and laid it in her arms. She said nothing, but a gentleness, long absent, crept over her face. After an uncertain moment she seated herself on a log and drew the cover from the case. Then she opened it and looked at the instrument, curiously, with reverence, before she took it on her knee. At last she began to play, softly, haltingly, the tune Haworth had taught her that day at the spring.

Baptiste stood listening in astonishment. He knew the air. Often he had heard young Haworth whistle it on the trail. It usually warned the Post of the approaching pack train. And only the evening before, on the doorstep at Nisqually mo'sieur had tuned the new instrument to that song. "Merci, Francesca," he cried when she came to the end, "Merci, but dat ees fine. Ma leetle gal ees have de museek ear. But play it some more. Encore! Encore!" And clapping

his hands in repeated applause, he seated himself beside her on the log and prepared to listen again.

She began the tune with a surer, stronger touch, and, more confident of the technique, this time she gave thought to the words of the song; her fingers found expression and the melody floated out on the great silence, lingered, multiplied along the stream, giving to the solitudes mystery and a voice.

"Then weep no more my lady; weep no more today,
For we'll sing one song of the old Kentucky home,
The old Kentucky home so — far away."

The echo died far off. A drop of moisture fell on the hand that rested on the strings. Baptiste started. "Francesca, you be'n onhappee. Ees it you have no home? For sure dat sacré Injun camp ees not good plas for you, an' you doan' lak live by Marie's cabane some more. But leesten. A'm able mek ma leetle gal one bran' new cabane in dat plas of cedars you lak so mooch, where de river ees mek de gran' turn. It can have three room an' one beeg balconnee, to see all up an' down stream. Francesca, you ees wait long tam for your father; you doan' be able fin' him; ees it pos'ble now, you marry on me?"

She did not speak, but she met his look with such despair, such intensity of appeal in her eyes that the voyageur lifted his hand to his throat, easing the handkerchief knot, and turned his face to the river. "Well, dat ees all right," he said after a moment, "dat ees all right; I ain' goin' tro'ble you some more. But ma leetle gal doan' have mooch frien's, an' she

ees mek so beeg meestake 'bout Mo'sieur le Commandan' ees her father. All tam I mek monself sorry 'bout dat, Francesca."

"It ees not mistake, Baptiste." Her voice took its deepest contralto note, and she used unconsciously the English she had refused the Commandant, but which, in her pride, she had always exacted from her foster brother. "It ees not mistake. Mon Dieu, no! Monsieur le Commandant ees my father."

The Canadian's glance returned to her face. "How ees dat, Francesca? Mo'sieur ees tell me how he ees dare to de garrison when you arrive, an' Mo'sieur le Commandan' ees say it ees meestake."

She paused to lay the guitar in its case, on the ground, then, beginning at the time on the banks of the Yakima, when she heard Singing Bird's story, she told him everything. Little Beaver's descriptions tallied well with all he had learned from his mother, French Marie, about that first Francesca, and the meagre accounts the older Lamont had gathered of that young officer, who had deserted her in the country of the Blackfeet; and if her foster brother had a remaining doubt when she finished, brokenly, the recital of that denial at the garrison, he was convinced when she came to that second interview, in the burn where the Commandant had sought her. "Mon Dieu, Baptiste," she said at last, "you can beli've it; so gre't man can lie. He ees 'shame' my Indian blood, sacré yes, but it ees true; he ees my father."

She got to her feet, her body quivering, locking

her hands in a tightening grip. Baptiste also rose, but, looking into her face, his volubility failed. After a moment she went on. "I'm able un'stand 'bout him; but Billee" — her voice caught in a sob — "Billee — too — ees 'shame'. He — was not able speak — to me. He must — turn his back — lak I'm not there." She paused again; her hands dropped clenched at her sides; her face hardened; her lips lost their curve and set in a thin line. "He — ees laugh," she added. "Sacr , yes, he ees all tam laugh."

"No, Francesca, dat ees one meestake, for sure. Mo'sieur but looks 'way for he ain' able see you onhappee." His own glance moved to the river, seeking the hidden channel around the point that enclosed the cove. Presently his face lighted. He thrust his hand into his blouse. "Monjee, Francesca," he exclaimed. "A'm most forget de brigade ees bring you dat letter of P re La Framboise. But look. Read it. De good cur  ees goin' tell ma leetle gal what she can do."

She took the letter, her hand shook a little, and stood weighing it an instant, then she tore it, unopened, in two, and putting the pieces together retore them, again and again, and dropped the fragments over the bank. The current carried them out mid-stream.

The voyageur watched her aghast. "Francesca," he stammered at last, "Francesca, what ees it you do? It ees de letter of de cur . What ees goin' happen to you?"

"Nothing, Baptiste; nothing more." She drew herself straight, holding her chin high, and folded her arms. "The curé ees but write how he ees bring those sisters to mek the new convent by Nisqually; but I doant care 'bout that; I'm not able be nun lak them, for sure. I can't beli've what the curé ees all tam tell me, Baptiste. The Holy Mother doant care 'bout half-breed girl lak me. For so long tam I have ask her to help me; every night and morning I have ask her, but she doant hear."

"Monjee, Francesca, ees it you grow be one heretic?"

"I think so, Baptiste. I lak best to be Klickitat; you un'stand, Klickitat, and go back to the co'ntry of the Yakimas."

"Ees it den you forget 'bout de yo'ng chief Flying Hawk, so quick?"

Her body trembled a little; the quiver swept her face. "No, Baptiste, I doant forget Flying Hawk; that ees why I stay here. When the Walla Walla finds a yo'ng squaw for his new tepee, and ees forget 'bout me, I will go back to Kam-i-ah-kan."

Baptiste looked off once more to the point that locked the cove, like one seeking, helplessly, a way out. "Francesca," he said at last, "ees it not pos'ble you see mo'sieur? He ees try long tam fin' you an' spik to you."

"No." Her voice vibrated a cello note; the steel in her eyes flamed. "No, it ees mooch best he doant try to find me some more. It ees best if he sees me on the trail he doant speak to me — one word."

The next instant, her glance falling to the guitar, lying where she had placed it in the open case, she caught it up and struck it, with violence, across the log. Again and again she struck, and swiftly gathering the pieces, bunched them and tied them with the strings. She held out the bundle to the shaking voyageur. "Go, Baptiste," she said and drew a great breath, "tek this fine instrument to monsieur. Tell him it ees mooch too gran' for no-'count half-breed girl who ees mek him so 'shame'. Tell him he ees forget Francesca ees not not so mooch lak her mother. Tell him she laks best to be Klickitat, all Klickitat; she ees 'shame' to be white."

There fell then a silence. But presently Baptiste laid the wrecked guitar in the case, and, closing the lid, drew the green cover carefully over it. Then he lifted it reverently, as he might have taken the dead body of a child, and placed it in the bow of his canoe. Francesca watched him, standing with her arms folded, head high, two brilliant spots of color burning in her cheeks.

At last he took his place in the canoe and lifting the paddle to push off, looked up. "Good-by, Francesca," he said simply, "I ain' goin' tro'ble you some more. But, sometam, ma leetle gal needs Baptiste, I lak know 'bout dat, for sure."

XX

THE SIGNAL FIRE

FRANCESCA, leading the way from the beach, followed a faint trail cross-cutting the side of a great headland. Everywhere the shores were illumined with changing dogwood and maple; her feet sank in a brilliant carpet of leaves each step. She never had visited the lower Sound before, and presently, while she waited for the two Indian girls whom she had distanced, she looked back through the tree tops, taking in with the fine air, the color and sparkle and swing of the sea. Her face softened and the old delight, now seldom roused, shone in her eyes.

Presently the young squaws appeared, slipping and winding between encroaching boughs, in sheer enjoyment of the muscular freedom, for it had been a long day spent in Leschi's canoe. Francesca moved on before them to the summit and trailed across the level to the front of the promontory, which dropped a straight treeless wall, dividing the sea in two arms. Suddenly, skirting the cliff, she stopped. A man, who stood leaning on a shoulder of rock, turned and looked at her with a pleasant "Clahowya."

He was a kind, quiet man — she had seen him several times at the trading post — who had built

a country place in a small cove a few miles down the island. She answered his salutation and moved on. At the same moment a second man, seated on a stony bench with his hat on his knee, turned his face from the panorama before him, and started to rise with a quick flush of recognition. He was the Commandant.

"You are a long way from home," said the officer, smiling. "But I suppose you came down with Leschi's Indians. I saw them passing through here this morning. They came of course" — He paused, looking at her half puzzled, half amused; she had refused his extended hand. "They came of course," he repeated, "for the salmon run."

He had spoken in English, but Francesca answered in Chinook. "I came with the Nisquallies, yes; but Leschi has gone to the camp of the Clallams."

"The Clallams? Well, I'm glad they are again friendly with the Nisquallies. And you, no doubt, stopped off here to wait for him and see this incomparable view of the lower country. Colonel," he added, turning to the Commandant, "this is Francesca."

The officer settled back in his place. "I know Francesca," he answered easily.

"Of course you do. Who doesn't? Why, I heard of you long before I reached Puget Sound." His glance came back, smiling, to Francesca. "That voyageur, Baptiste, who brought me up the coast from the Columbia, told me first about you. He said you read French with Father La Franchise, but you

liked the English better, and that you always insisted on his using it."

"If you understand it," she said, still in Chinook, "I like best to speak the Yakima of my mother. I do not speak English." She moved past the two men and seated herself, her back to them, on a lower bench.

The two Indian girls followed and silently chose places a little beyond her. The Commandant's gaze returned to the view spread like a painted map before him. Westward the Olympic Mountains threw a mighty rampart against the sunset, and northward the wooded islands of the great archipelago gloomed purple out of a brilliant sea. "So," he said slowly, "So, these are the possessions which Sir Douglas calls the best grazing country in the Northwest, and which that distant Congress of ours designated as a number of barren and desolate rocks, not worth the hour of discussion."

His companion nodded: "Sir Douglas as you know is quartering troops on the most fertile island of all, San Juan. That's it, that long, undulating coast off there in haze."

"Yes." The Commandant's voice quickened. "England found it to her interest to parley for extension of the Joint Occupancy treaty three times. She knew the advantage of settlement. She has urged the Hudson Bay Company to build frequent and lasting posts, and induced the Canadians to take up farming lands southward as far as the Columbia. Their cattle have multiplied on Nisqually plains, and they have held claims in that neighborhood so

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long that they have come to regard them as British soil. American citizens are still forbidden to erect cabins there, and we are obliged to pay tribute to England for the use of the new army post site at Steilacoom."

"True, true. And, Colonel, there is another point. The Hudson Bay Company have always controlled the Indians. Before the Governor can perfect his treaties and receive and distribute the annuities, Sir Douglas and his traders have it in their power to instigate an Indian war. Already east of the mountains rumors are afloat."

The Commandant met the settler's look with his hint of a smile. "Not so fast, Ebey; the Hudson Bay Company will rest neutral there. I know the Indians; the young bloods are impatient and it isn't always possible for the old chiefs to hold them in check."

"Colonel, I believe the Governor himself is in danger. He will be cut off on that journey home from the Blackfeet country, unless — the Nez Perce meets him with an escort."

The Commandant's brows clouded. "I admit that," he answered slowly; "but the Nez Perce will meet him, and I trust he will return by forced marches without delay." He rose to his feet and stood looking off to the coast of San Juan. "And if the annuities arrive in time," he added, "His Excellency will be able to give attention to these boundary claims; otherwise —"

"Otherwise, if they do not arrive soon?"

"Then, I believe as you do. It will take all his time and ability to put down an outbreak."

There was a silence during which both men studied that farthest, amethyst coast; then the settler said, "Colonel, did you ever see a fleet of Northern war canoes?"

"No. You are thinking of that raid last year, before I arrived, when the Massachusetts punished them. With so many canoes destroyed and twenty warriors killed they will not be in a hurry to come again."

The Commandant moved a step and his glance fell, unconsciously, to Francesca. She had turned a little and sat watching him steadily. He started and drew his hand across his eyes, and swinging around looked in the direction of the trail which, crossing the shorter path down the bluff, followed the ridge back through the interior of the island. "Your horses are standing, Ebey," he said, "and twilight comes early in the timber."

"True, Colonel, and I never like to leave that filly tied long in the woods. Good-by, Francesca. Tell Tyee Leschi the hearts of the Bostons are warm. Ask him to speak for us." And he led the way down to the waiting horses.

But presently the Commandant looked back. He halted a moment in uncertainty, then, drawing a small, morocco bound book from his pocket, he returned to Francesca. "Here is a pretty story," he said. "My daughter Lucia slipped it in my pocket to pass the time aboard the sloop that brought

me to the islands. Take it, Francesca; read it, and try to like the English again."

She did not answer, and she did not take the book; she only sat looking up at him with that steady, disturbing gaze. He laid the volume on the rocky bench beside her, and hurried on to overtake his host.

When he disappeared in the trees Francesca's glance fell to the book. It had a red, inviting cover; a growing desire rose in her eyes. Finally she took it and turned a few leaves. Then suddenly she went back to the beginning and began eagerly to decipher the lines. It was a copy of "The Lady of the Lake." She forgot her surroundings. Heart and soul entered into the story. It was as though once more on the banks of the Nisqually, in the heat of the day, she listened to Hawthorth, but newly come home from Monterey.

The glory faded in the west; the islands receded and at last the evening star hung a green light in the heavens and cast a faint trail up the shadowy sea. Francesca looked up. She could no longer see to read. She rose quickly. Her companions were gathering wood; dragging heavy boughs up to the edge of the cliff and heaping them in a great pile. She hurried to join them and worked with unnecessary force, ashamed of her lapse.

At last, far off across the channel, a thread of smoke rose, followed by a burst of fire. Instantly, on another island, Leschi's second signal flared. Then Francesca ran to the bench where she had left the book

and brought it, tearing out a handful of leaves. She fell to her knees and thrusting the pages under the branches, sheltered them and struck a match. The two Indian girls seated themselves on the ground and waited in silence. She stripped the volume, using it to feed the first flame. A twig crackled. Her voice broke in a low, passionate chant. It was as though she coaxed the blaze. It leaped, a high and slender pillar set against the gloom, and her contralto gathered volume with the multiplying flames, and full, clear, thrilling challenged the night. It had commenced an Indian requiem, but after a break, it sounded unexpected depths, and merged into the French of the Jesuit. It was not a vesper hymn, nor yet a te deum, but the song she had heard outside the mission garden and repeated for Haworth at the spring.

XXI

GREAT MEDICINE

FINALLY Leschi's sea canoe, bearing on its high prow the figure head of a raven, the royal totem, and propelled by a score of boatmen, rounded a promontory and the black pinnacles of Mt. Che-am stood sharply cut against the autumn sky. Backward the Lake of Great Medicine ¹ stretched a pale, green-lighted sheet far and away to the front of a shining mountain; and the wooded bluffs and peaks, that walled the basin all its length of forty miles, gathered vastness from their mirrored double, which the wake of the craft hardly disturbed. The dip, drip of the paddles rang a continuous note of inquiry from every shoulder and head.

The available spaces between the canoemen were heaped with blankets, tenting, yards on yards of brilliant cotton cloth, boxes of gay handkerchiefs, small trunks filled with trinkets, all new and purchased at the Hudson Bay post for the hy-as potlatch which was to precede the council and win the ears of the Nisqually's old enemies the Nootkas. This merchandise, to which was added a fine bull elk that Leschi had stalked and taken on a lower slope, freighted the vessel to the rim.

Presently the canoe swung under the sheer, craggy

¹ Lake Harrison, British Columbia.

heights of an island, and on, across a small cove to its upper horn. Where a knob or ledge offered hold firs and hemlocks twined their roots, sinking them wedge like into clefts, and hugged the rock close. Huge boulders overhead hung toppling, and fallen ones formed islets beneath.

When they came abreast of the last headland a murmur ran through the crew. It began with the bowman, a note of protest, and ended in serious acquiescence with Leschi at the steering paddle. "Ah-de-dah! Ah-de-dah!"

The canoe lifted to a swell. The lake was no longer a mirror. A flaw, drawing through a gap from the canyon of the Fraser, struck the surface dead ahead, and a cross-current pulling up the outlet, met this wind and swirled and churned and sent the water combing two ways.

Francesca, resting high in the long slanting prow, turned her face from the island and saw. She rose a trifle more on her elbow, waiting in silence while the canoe met the first crest quartering, and lunged down into the trough. The crew took the waves skillfully, with an upward dip of the paddles that seemed to draw the water under the keel; but presently the hunter plunged his beak deep and Francesca's shoulders dripped spume. She shook herself and laughed a low, fearless laugh, keyed to the note of the cutwater. Her face like the lake for a moment was all light, sparkle, wild charm. She crept forward and took the upreared figure-head in the circle of her arm, and watchful, expectant,

challenged a sharper buffet. She knew and loved the wa'er a shade less than Skookum, her little horse.

The canoe passed from the tempered protection of the promontory. A cloud trailed over the pinnacles of Che-am; its ragged ends streaming and wrapping like rent canvas around broken spars. The winds gathered. They picked up the lake in sheets and flung them broadside against the island. In the thick of the cross-cut part of the crew lightened the vessel, plunging dexterously overboard. They swam alongside, easily, lustily, with a hand ready in difficult moments to stay or give impetus to the craft. So she forged safely with her precious cargo out of the snarl.

Under cover of the mainland Leschi rested on his paddle and sent a greeting to the shore. "Clayhowya. Clahowya Clak-la-min-gu-lah. Clahowya Hootlas. Killiday clahowya."

An answer rang from scores of throats. It rose above the swirl and rush of the lake and the souging of the firs. A stirring, lingering "Clahowya. Clahowya Leschi. Clahowya. Clahowya."

Many canoes were beached on the rocky shore. The temporary village stretched a long street under a densely wooded ridge to the foot of the lake, where the shelters clustered thicker on the front of a level that filled the gap towards the Fraser and Mt. Che-am. A great cloud of steam rose continually and hung over the upper end of the encampment. It marked the basin of hot springs, and the rocks where Leschi made a landing were stained brilliantly with minerals.

Before the keel grounded two Nisquallies ran

splashing ahead and spread a line of blankets up the water front to the bark lodge of Clak-la-min-gu-lah, who kept his place and his dignity as the great chief of the Nootkas should, smoking and awaiting the Nisqually by the live embers of his camp fire. Indians gathered in standing files along the carpeted way, then Leschi stepped from his canoe, a proud and imposing figure. He loved the apparel of the whites and he wore that day a stiff beaver adorned with three upright red plumes set at even distances. His stalwart shoulders were thrust into a scarlet coat, for which he had paid many peltries at the trading post, where the garment had been discarded at the close of its glory, by an officer returning to England. Only one Indian stalked behind the tyee, and he was the emissary of Kam-i-ah-lan who had accompanied Leschi home from the Y... country. He was a young and splendid sub-... picked from the great Yakima's body guard. His moccasins, beaded after an intricate pattern, were new; his head-dress of eagle's plumes was a wonder; his great chest and powerful arms glittered with rare trinkets of beads and brass, and the blanket that partly enwrapped him was like Flying Hawk's priceless Navajo.

When the two chiefs reached the end of the walk Leschi's retainers quickly gathered the blankets from the beach and brought them to the lodge, and, in a brief and sonorous speech, the great Nisqually presented them all to the Nootka.

A little later, while the new comers made camp, Francesca walked with curious interest towards the

hot springs. Many squaws were busy around the huge natural caldron, which seethed and bubbled and spouted continuous clouds of steam. They were cooking salmon and haunches of venison in strong baskets, that were lowered by ropes of cedar bast or withes of willow and left suspended in the boiling water. The elk was seized and dressed and quartered speedily, and laid aside for the great banquet which was to be served when the consort of Leschi's canoe should arrive the following day.

All that evening and the next morning other canoes continued to come, so that, at the hour of the feast, there was a multitude; and by the time the great Nisqually started the potlatch, lavishing presents on every chief and the most distinguished warriors, little remained for the rank and file.

At last the tyees assembled in the space reserved and Leschi opened the council. "My brothers," he said, using the Chinook which is the court language of the Northwest, "I know the Bostons. Many moons, since they first came to cut the big trees by the great Skyue of the Nisquallies, I have watched the Bostons. When they made the hy-as trees small, with the swift knife that sings, and built their lodges, I, Leschi, saw. The Bostons are not like the Hudson Bay men who come to trade blankets and guns for the peltries of the beaver and otter; who hunt sometimes and trap, but share only with the Indians, and are good friends with them. The Bostons are not like the Black Robes who come to talk about the white man's Tyee Saghalee; who show us how to

plant the potato and do many things to help us. The Bostons do not make the cultus potlatch; they take much; they want always more; they give nothing."

His deep, sonorous voice reached the outermost circle. When he paused a hush was everywhere; only the lake, passion-spent, plained a subdued protest, and Che-am seemed to draw nearer, listening with glooming front to the recital of the eloquent Nisqually. "My brothers, the Bostons believe they are better than other men. They despise the Indians. We are in their way. They promise much, but they do not keep their word. They laugh at us. They take our land and crowd us together in small places. They think we will stay; that we will grow sick and die. And by and by, when they are many and we are few, they will take those who are left away that they may have all. In their great fire canoes they will take us, *copa si-ah*, to a place of darkness where the sun never shines; a land of muddy waters where no fish can live, to be forever — slaves."

He finished and the multitude hung, a breathless interval, on his words; then a deep sigh, like the stir of the waking sea, swept from circle to circle and swelled in a long lament. "Ah-de-dah! Ah-de-dah! Ah-de-dah!"

Next Kam-i-ah-kan's emissary rose. He spoke of the Governor's council. He told how the great Yakima had not wanted to sign the treaty; how he had urged the other chiefs to oppose it. "But," his voice reverberated on the tense silence, "Kam-

i-ah-kan stood alone. As a single pine tree stood the great Yakima; a pine tree shaken by many winds. They grew too strong for him; he was overthrown. My brothers, the young men believed the Bostons. They wanted the school that they might learn the ways of the Boston and master him. But the Indian has not the understanding; his thought is small; he does not see far. The Bostons always will have their way. If we let them come they will stay; more will follow; their lodges will be as the sands of Hwulch. They will be too strong for us; they will crowd us out; as the Yakimas crowded the fish eaters of the Columbia the Bostons will crowd us all. They want our country. They promise much, schools, blankets, the white man's flour and sugar, and the Boston money to buy more of them every year. They promise, but Tyee Leschi is right; they do not keep their word. The White Father is far away. He does not write his name on the treaty; the goods do not come. He does not care. He forgets. And the Bostons take our land; they laugh. They think when we have no more hunting grounds; no grass for our horses and cattle; when we can take no more berries and roots from the earth; when they have killed all the deer and buffalo — we must die."

He paused. Again a lament ran through the multitude. "Ah-de-dah! Ah-de-dah!"

"My brothers," he went on after a moment, "the Bostons want everything; this is true. The young chiefs have learned it. They can not look Kam-i-ah-kan in the face; their eyes fall with shame. They

want to show him their blood is not water; they want to show him they are men."

A murmur of applause rippled through the council, then Leschi spoke again. "The Bostons despise us. Like the Black Robes they tell us a man must have but one squaw. They marry our daughters; they choose the best, the children of great tyees and warriors, and they laugh and go away. They come again and with them come white wives. The Indian squaws and tenas papooses have no place. My brothers, here is the Little Sister of Kam-i-ah-kan. Listen to her and see if I am right."

Francesca came forward. She stood unhurried before the multitude with the assurance of high resolve. She told the story of her mother as she had learned it from Little Beaver. Then she described her own rescue in the mountains by the Black Robe La Franboise. She dwelt with gratitude on the years passed among the Canadians of the Hudson Bay Company; years during which she had never seen her father, and, doubtless, he had given her no thought. She told how at last she had gone in search of him. She came to that hour of denial. Her voice struck its deepest vibrant note; the color burned in her cheeks two brilliant spots. Indians here and there in the nearer circles sprang to their feet. But the silence outside her speech remained profound.

"The Boston is not like the Hudson Bay man," she concluded. "He speaks many fine words, like no Indian can say, but he means nothing. He plays fine music, he sings to the Indian girl, when there is

no white woman to listen, and, when he grows tired, like an old moccasin, worn out, despised, she is left on the trail."

She stopped, her body trembling, hands clenched at her sides, a sensitive, high-strung creature cruelly flayed; then she turned stumbling back to her seat. The lament of the multitude deepened. It was like the tramp of breaking waves. The young Yakima sprang into the speaker's place again.

"My brothers, you think of the treaties with anger and shame; but wait. A hundred young men are ready to show Kam-i-ah-kan their hearts. Soon, when the Governor comes home from the country of the Blackfeet, they will ride fast to a small gorge in the hills. Like the wolf-pack they will go and fall on his night camp. Not one will be left."

A movement began in the outer circle. It was as though a great wind rose, sweeping, wave on wave, to the front. The Yakima's voice was lost in the storm note of the multitude. At last Clak-la-min-gu-lah took his place. The circles settled back. Before the fierce Nootka there fell a new silence.

"My brothers," he said, "I also know the Bostons. Many moons ago when I came down to fish for the little salmon by the land of the Snohomish, Pat-canin sent word to the Bostons and the great fire canoe came. It was night and the Medicine man mamooked tamanamus; the young men danced. Then the white chief said, 'Be still. Go. Go back to your home at Nootka and come not again.' And I, Clak-la-min-gu-lah answered, 'We will stay.' Then the

white chief was angry and sent fire from his hy-as guns. Twenty Nootkas fell dead and the rest ran to hide in the wood. And the Bostons broke our canoes; not one was left. The totem was torn from my canoe and burned in the camp fire. Two days we hid in the forest, then, because we were hungry and had no points for our arrows, we talked with the white chief. I, Clak-la-min-gu-lah, spoke, so that he carried us on the great fire ship copa si-ah, and our own people came with other canoes to meet us and took us home. But twenty warriors were dead, ah-de-dah! And one was a young chief. It was necessary to take the blood of nineteen Bostons and a white chief. For this have we come again. Last night we found the tyee. By his lodge we killed him and brought away his head, quickly, before tenas sun. My brothers you shall see it, the head of the hy-as Boston, and know Clak-la-min-gu-lah the Nootka speaks well."

This mention of the head was like setting the torch to tinder. Instantly circles broke up and divided, while the sub-chiefs tried to outspoke each other. Then, while the clamor grew, a hoary squaw pressed into the narrowing centre, bearing the ghastly trophy high on a pole. It was greeted with howls and execrations. It was thrown down and dragged briefly in the dust, and caught up by different hands and shaken aloft. A rattle sounded above the tumult, the roll of a tomtom, and a company of young men swung into position around the pole, working themselves into the frenzy of a war dance.

Francesca pressed out of the way. She lifted her

glance once to that severed head and her limbs shook; her blood went cold. It was the face of the man she had seen with the Commandant, that evening on the headland.

She turned and pushed her way in a panic through the crush, and hurried blindly down the shore. She ran faster and faster, with her hands to her ears trying to shut out the frightful discord. Finally she stopped and looked about her. A bend closed on the encampment behind her. At her feet stretched the broad channel of the outlet to the lake. She could not cross it; there was the wide sweep of water to the island on her right, and on her left an impossible bluff. She could go no further. She crept into a cleft formed by two giant boulders and roofed by a third. The waves lapped complainingly outside; a sprig of hemlock pushed through a crevice and stung her cheek.

"Mercy, Blessed Virgin," she whispered. "Mercy, Mary, Mother of God." And she huddled to her knees and unconsciously groped for the rosary she had used to wear under her dress. Her hands found only Flying Hawk's emeralds. She threw herself on her face in a passion of sobbing.

After a while she grew quiet. She sat erect, looking out on the opal-lighted lake. "I must grow more Klickitat," she told herself, brokenly. "I must forget I am so mooch white; but he — he — was a good man — and he talked — to me — so pleasantlee. I — have lak him gre't."

XXII

THE WORST

BY the first of November the afternoon sun fell in long, slanting shafts between the bare branches of the oaks that bordered the square, and the floor of the veranda, where Anna waited for the Commandant, was barred with shadow; there was a touch of frost in the air. Presently, anxious at his delay, she rose from the bench and went in through the hall to his office door. There was no response to her knock and, after a moment, she turned the knob and entered.

He was seated at his desk, with his elbows propped on it and his face in his palms, but at the sound of the closing door, he started erect and dropped his hands. He looked unaccountably worn; lines were furrowed between his brows. She crossed the room and stopped before him with a sweet solicitude in her eyes. "Something troubles you," she said. "I've noticed it for weeks; it keeps you awake hours at night. When are you going to tell me?"

He got to his feet and stood steadying himself with his hand on the desk. "You have your hat on, Anna," he said unevenly. "You are going for a walk."

She did not answer directly but continued to

probe him with her anxious eyes; then, "The Decatur arrived this morning," she said. "Have you forgotten? We are to dine on board."

"To be sure." He paused to look at his watch. "We have just half an hour to walk down to the landing and meet the ship's boat. Is Lucia ready?"

"She has gone. She wanted to ride around by way of the lakes and the branch from Nisqually. She will stop at Mrs. Webster's to change her habit and meet us at the landing. Walters carried her bag."

"She should have waited to go with us." He took his hat from a chair and gathered some papers from his desk. As he put them in his pocket his glance met hers.

"I see, I see," she exclaimed. "There is threatened outbreak east of the mountains. Those Frenchmen who stopped a few days ago on their way to Nisqually were right. Atrocities have already commenced; you have received dispatches. But you are afraid to tell me the worst. Why do you always spare me, and smooth things for me as though I'm not fit to be a soldier's wife? I've tried to keep pace with you; I want to face things with you, be worthy your trust."

"And you are; you are." He put his arm about her and led her to the door. "You have held me to my best, you know that, from the first hour I knew you. The trouble is, if there is any, you have always kept a little above me."

He shook his head, smiling, and held the door for her. "But you are right," he continued gravely as they

went down the steps, "these dispatches are alarming. I am taking them to go over with the officers on board. I shall probably send a company to the mountains in the morning. Our agent on the Walla Walla has been murdered; the goods confiscated. The Governor, on his way home from the Blackfeet council has just escaped ambush. He was marching straight into the trap, a gorge in the Bitter Root Mountains, when Lawyer, the Nez Perce, warned him, and gave him escort around a secret way. The Walla Wallas, Yakimas, Spokanes, are committing new depredations every day, and the small force sent out from The Dalles is marching into certain action. Even on this side the Cascades the miserable Nisquallies have changed. Families have been massacred on White River and on the Snoqualmie."

There was a brief silence. They passed through the gates into the wood road to the harbor. The path stretched soft, springy underfoot, carpeted thick with needles; the air was resinous with fir and hemlock, and every puff of wind added the tang of the sea. She slipped her hand through his arm. "Thank you for telling me," she said. "No truth is harder than suspense."

His arm under her hand trembled. "Anna," and his voice shook, "there is something more. It is — as you think. I have been afraid to tell you — the worst. I —"

He stopped. Looking down into her lifted face a quiver swept his own. He turned his eyes away searching the trees. Moisture gathered on his fore-

head. He was like one come to a sharp halt on the brink of a precipice. Then he grasped the expedient and drew back cautiously into safety. "I — have other news more definite, close at home. Ebey, that fine man who entertained me during my trip to the lower Sound, has been murdered by Northern Indians. He was called to his door by a knocking in the night; and the next morning his body was found, headless, outside the threshold."

There was another pause. She stood looking up at him with wide eyes; her face was very pale; the hand on his arm tightened. How terrible," she exclaimed. "Without warning, in a moment, roused from sleep. How terrible."

He laid his hand over hers. "You see," he said quietly, "I must take the first opportunity to send you and Lucia around to the lower Columbia, to sail in the first vessel going south."

She shook her head. "It seems safer here at the garrison. I'd rather stay, Malcolm. Every year that I live I'm less willing to be separated from you."

The Commandant pressed her hand again, but walked on with her in silence. After a while she said, "It's strange how these peaceable Nisquallies have changed; but of course they need good Father La Framboise to manage them. Even that poor girl Francesca shows a different spirit."

The Commandant started. "You have seen her again?"

"Yes. Yesterday when Lucia and I went shopping to the trading post we passed her by Gravelly

Lake. She was sitting on a log watching that spotted pony crop the fine grass, and I stopped to speak to her. I told her if she would come twice a week to the barracks I would be glad to teach her English. But she answered in Chinook she did not care to learn."

"It's useless to offer to help her, Anna; don't try any more. She steadily refuses to go to school; either to the reservation school down in Oregon, or to a girls' school I told her about in New York."

"You did that? You offered to send her East to school? And I've blamed you; I thought you were indifferent. But I don't see why she refused. That day she came to the garrison she was eager to learn. The white in her then seemed to predominate."

"It does predominate."

"You mean she is proud; proud and discouraged. It isn't possible she still clings to that wretched mistake; but we must take steps at once to find her father. Surely there is some trace of him. Have you written, inquired at headquarters?"

They had reached the brow of the hill which dipped to the harbor, and he stopped, looking out across the matchless sapphire sea, held like a splendid jewel in the vast setting of the shining Olympic Mountains. The quiver, like a ripple from disturbed depths, again swept his face. "Think, Anna, of the woman he married; who cares — whom he has allowed to care — for him. She isn't strong physically; she is almost frail; he has to watch her. You understand, Anna. She is the kind of woman who loves deeply, steadfastly, but whose love is founded on respect.

She is proud of him; all these years she has looked up to him; she has set him above reproach. The truth — about Francesca — would shake the foundations of her life."

"I understand all that; it's hard, miserable. But think of Francesca. He brought her into the world; he owes her something. If you are too busy, Malcolm; too harassed by army matters, tell me his name. I'll find him. I'll learn his wife's address and write to her. I'll explain carefully, gently. A man never could."

"No, a man never could. But — you don't understand, Anna. Francesca — " He swept his hand across his forehead; the palm was wet. "Francesca demands all. It comes to that — all — or nothing."

He moved on down the hill. After a moment he looked back. "The boat is waiting for us," he said, and paused to give her his hand over a rough place.

Lucia was not waiting at the landing, and, in answer to the Commandant's question, the coxswain pointed to another of the ship's boats moving towards her anchorage in the stream. "The Lieutenant is taking her, sir," he explained.

But presently the Lieutenant rested on his oars. The little craft veered from her course, drifting around northward, down the shining sea. Lucia leaned over the side to trail her jewelled fingers in the water. "It happened this way," she said. "We were riding from the cross-road to Nisqually and came to the brow of the hill overlooking the Sound. It was a still day like this, with the sea a great sapphire,

sparkling in the late sun; and Billy pulled up Barnabee to say, 'It was this, yes, it was just this; now I know.' And when I asked 'What do you know?' he replied, 'Why, that this was the color and light I was reminded of, when I first saw your eyes.'"

She laughed softly, with a side glance at the Lieutenant, and sat erect, lifting her handkerchief from her lap to dry her hand. He smiled, a swift smile that was chiefly a lighting of his dark eyes, and dipped his oars. "A pretty enough speech, Miss Lucia; and you, how did you answer your gallant troubadour?"

"Why, I asked him if he had practised those lines with the Spanish lady of whom he told us."

"And he?"

"Well, if you must know, he answered, 'The Se-fiora's eyes, you should remember, are intensely dark.'"

At this the Lieutenant laughed aloud. His glance moved from her face out across the harbor. Westward and southward wooded islands rose through low haze and hung like floating gardens on the sleeping sea. "But Haworth was right," he said presently, and his look returned; "they are just this color, with the same warm lights. They only lack—" he paused, enjoying her surprise that any man could think they lacked—"shall I call it depth—or soul?"

Lucia flushed; her lashes fell; she turned her face away. Her discomfiture was charming, and the newness of it, the unexpectedness, was to the young officer a delight. But it passed almost instantly.

She dipped her hand again over the side, listening to the music of the water on her fingers. Presently she began to hum a tune and then to sing;

"List, 'twill be well for thee, list while I tell for thee
What magic spell for thee I have in store.
Art cannot make it, doubt cannot shake it,
Yet but once break it, 'twill heal no more!"

The Lieutenant, resting again on his oars, looked off absently to those amber islands. He took up the words in a musing undertone.

"'Tis a rare talisman, so wondrous powerful
That in one hour full health will restore,
Worlds could not buy it, come, love, do try it,
I only ask thee, try, and no more."

The last notes lingered a silver moment and died far out. His look fell to her face. "That's just it, Miss Lucia. A man can go anywhere, do anything, fight, win through; but he's got to know there's a woman waiting for him, loving him, believing in him, proud of him, holding his honor safe while he is gone."

"Oh," she said, with her quick lift of the shoulders and brows, "how good. How tiresome. There was once a girl, Lieutenant; she was called Pandora, and a man trusted her with a box filled with all the virtues of the world. She opened it and let them escape. I'm like her."

"Miseries, you mean, Miss Lucia; miseries, not virtues. But I'm ready to trust you." He leaned towards her a little and his voice took a softer note. "The soul is there, sleeping, perhaps, down in the

depths of you, but it is there — I know it. Some day, sooner or later, I shall find the right word and it will wake."

She leaned back in her seat and sent a slow glance about her. It included the Decatur, rocking gently at her moorings, and rested finally on the Lieutenant's face. "You aren't rowing," she said, and those sapphire lights danced in her eyes, "and mother — mother is there on the forward deck with the Captain, watching us and wondering why you are letting the current sweep us straight down to the Narrows."

He turned a brief and indifferent glance backward, where the channel narrowed into a swift current pent between crowding shores.

"It's ebb-tide," she added.

But the boat continued to drift. "Some day you are going to love me, as I want you to, with all the strength of you — body and heart and soul."

"Lieutenant," she cried with sudden warmth, and grasped the sides of the boat, "we are going straight on to a sn-a-ag."

XXIII

LUCIA DECIDES

TYEE LESCHI stalked out of the narrow palisaded entrance to the trading building, which admitted Indians singly to barter, and joined the small band waiting beyond the stockade. His peltries of beaver trapped in mid-winter had been in prime condition, and he had acquired in exchange three rifles, with ammunition abundant for a two weeks' hunting trip, and some excellent knives.

As he rode down the knoll from the gate and splashed through the icy creek below with his following, the octagonal fort, built of hewn blocks of cedar, windowed by rifle slits, lifted its bulging upper story above the stockade behind him, and, like a monster head, argus-eyed, seemed to watch him. He moved eastward and before him the January snow, encrusted by a week of frost, stretched a spangled carpet over Nisqually plains, far and away to the American garrison, and the forest beyond, over-topped by the mighty barricade of the Cascade Mountains.

Within the enclosure Baptiste and a helper were lading Haworth's pack animals with supplies for his father's camp, in winter quarters south-eastward towards Natches Pass. The young man, himself a good huntsman, followed the chief with boyish

interest to the gateway, and stood watching the small cavalcade trail away into the sunrise. Leschi doubtless would see great sport up the Snoqualmie, where big game, driven down by deep snows from the high ridges, found feeding ground. Then his glance moved on and, resting on a smoke wreath that drifted up from the barracks, his lips breathed a whistle.

When he again noticed the Indians he saw they had passed a figure coming from the garrison, and, while his eyes lingered on this small and distant shape, he took up the words of the tune.

"List, 'twill be well for thee, list while I tell for thee."

He sang softly, with indifferent breaks and catches, so that Baptiste's explanations to his companion, who had but lately arrived in the Territory, reached him sub-consciously.

"Oh, ya-as A'm gre't frien's dose Injuns of Leschi, for sure; dey lak me fine. An' when you come look mon traps by Snoqualmee you ees goin' see one gran' elk hunt. But dese poor Nisquallies doan' hunt so mooch, Henray, lak dose fine Yakimas. Dey doan' have some wild cattle tek care on lak de Walla Wallas; an' plenty horses. Dey only sit fish mos' all tam in one canoe, so dey r's grow small to de laeg. An' dey ain' goin' be ab'le fight mooch, merci, no. You doan' ever hear 'bout Leschi's Injuns ees keel one brave capitan, to cut out his heart while it ees warm an' eat it, because dey beli've it ees goin' mek dem strong lak heem."

The other packer stopped his work, looking at Baptiste speechless, aghast.

"But ya-as, dat ees true, Henray. I have hear 'bout it from one man who ees be dere to de Rogue Rivière contree, when dat ees happen to one brave officier of de Columbia."

"Mon Dieu," said Henry finding voice, "Mon Dieu, Baptiste, I ain' able beli've it."

"It ees true," repeated Baptiste, nodding his head slowly, "but you doan' need be so scare', Henray. Dose Injuns of Kam-i-ah-kan ain' goin' come 'cross mountains now, through de winteer snow."

The song had died on Haworth's lips. He leaned in momentary sickness on the postern. That horror of Rogue River was not new to him, but it seemed suddenly to lose remoteness. His eyes sought Leschi's band, still trailing eastward, a lessening shadow on the plain, then wavered to the white solitudes. He seemed to see with the acuteness of second sight, that brave officer left mutilated on the Oregon field. He felt himself drawn to view the proof of that terrible rite. He bent to look into the hero's face. And instantly it was not that of the unfortunate captain but — *his own*.

The hallucination passed. He shivered, drew his hand across his eyes, and shaking off the influence, picked up the thread of his song.

"Monjee, Henray," continued Baptiste. "Doan' mek yourse'f so 'scare'. Mebbe dose Klickitats ees goin' come, sometam, but for sure dey doan' keel so good Catholeek lak you an' me. Père La Framboise

ees all tam say, 'You doan' have to be 'fraid dose Injuns, Baptiste, so long you wear dis holy cross an' bring peltries to Nisquallee.' Mo'sieur, mo'sieur, de load ees feenish."

Haworth turned, and running over the final chorus of his song in a whistle, inspected with critical eyes the arrangement of the packs. Then he drew out his wallet and paid the men. "The woods are miserably empty now, Baptiste," he said. "A man hears himself think in this dead silence of the snow."

The voyageur's eyes flashed swift intelligence. "But ya-as, mo'sieur, A'm able on'stan' dat. I be'n lonesome monself by de long trail. But leesten, it ees bes' you tek 'long one man of de Post."

"Oh, no, Baptiste, that isn't necessary." He untied the fretting thoroughbred and, setting his foot in the stirrup, vaulted up. "You know I travel alone only to Olympia. There two of my father's men meet me. It will be slow going, that's all, in this white silence, but the day will pass."

"Mo'sieur," — Baptiste laid his hand on Barnabee's neck — "it ees one cold winter an' you ees have mooch fine blankets here; an' dose sacré Nisquallies lak de sugar an' flour. Dey ain' goin' give Hudson Bay man some tro'ble, but for you it ees diffrent. Mo'sieur, it ees mooch bes' you tek 'long one man of de Post."

Haworth laughed. "I've taken care of myself a good many times, Baptiste. But come if you like; you can be of use at the noon halt and in crossing the big ford."

"But A'm not able. I an' mon frien' Henray must go look dose traps by Snoqualmee. But mo'sieur, dere ees Pierre Latouche who ees do nothing to-day. He ees ready in a moment, an' he ees have one good horse."

"Well, then, find Latouche. Tell him to hurry."

The voyageur went to call the man. Barnabee wheeled and his master allowed him to pace out through the gate. Leschi's band had disappeared. Only the solitary figure, approaching from the garrison, disturbed the plain. It was much nearer now, and clearly outlined against the snow. He started and lifted his hand to shade his eyes. Was it a woman? Alone? Afoot? He waited an uncertain moment. Yes, yes, he was sure of it. He watched her another brief interval. It was Lucia. Lucia, miles from the garrison, unattended, without her horse. Instantly he was off, down the knoll, over the creek, galloping to meet her.

At the same time she turned from the trail and moved lightly across the snow to the cover of a clump of firs. Presently he drew Barnabee down and swung him that way. But the horse stumbled, breaking through the crust to his knees. He made the grove slowly, and skirting, searching the trees, reached the farther side, where both the trail and the fort were out of view. The fugitive was there, resting against a wind-swept log, her head bent in serious thought.

Instantly Haworth was out of the saddle. "Lucia," he cried, "Lucia, what has happened?"

She looked up, laughter and anger warring in her eyes. "Nothing. Nothing ever happens at the barracks. Only — I've run away. Yes, it's true, Billy; I've decided to go with you."

She paused, watching him through lowered lashes; her breast heaving still from exercise; the pink of daybreak in her cheeks. Her face lifted flowerlike from the open collar of her army blue coat, and under her cap stray rings of sunbright hair danced in the crisp wind. He could not trust himself to speak directly, and she added softly, smiling a little, "I mean it, Billy; I'm not jesting this time. I came to go with you."

"You don't know what you are saying. You don't know what you are doing." She caught the break in his voice and saw his teeth set hard on his nether lip. Must he fight it out with his honor again, now, when time pressed? "But I understand, Miss Lucia. You were hardly over your disappointment at missing Christmas week in Olympia, and the New Year's ball, when that second invitation came from the Governor's daughter to visit her this week, and your father still insists the trail is unsafe and refuses to let you go by canoe."

"Yes, yes," she cried indignantly, "and the Decatur is to be there. Two dancing parties are arranged for the officers, and charades. Miss Stevens wants me for the leading part in three tableaux. No one else will do."

"But, Miss Lucia, it's all postponed. The Decatur hasn't sailed for Olympia. She was cruising along

Bainbridge Island and struck a reef. Word came to Nisqually last night. Her leak was stopped with blankets and she was floated off at high tide, and navigated to Seattle, and beached for repairs. When the messenger left two days ago she was still high and dry. You see," he added and smiled, "you must take Barnabee now, before you are missed, and ride home."

He bent to hold his palm for her foot, but she drew away. "I shall never go back to the garrison," she said; "never. Even if you were old and ugly as Walters I should have come. I had rather the Klickitats took me than live there another miserable day. Please, please hurry and bring me a horse."

He shook his head. "To-morrow you would be sorry; you would upbraid me. I can't do it. I think too much of you."

"Billy, Billy, there isn't so much time to waste." She paused controlling herself, then went on quickly. "Listen, Billy. It isn't the tableaux alone. Yesterday, when I thought I had eluded Walters so nicely, father was riding after me on the wood road. And, while you and I talked together by the lake, he was waiting around those first hemlocks. He met me when I left you and rode home with me. He had nothing to say all those miles, until we reached the stockade, and then he said only, 'I would not believe it of you, Lucia; I would not believe it, if I hadn't seen,' as though I had stolen his purse."

"It was unfair," Haworth exclaimed. "I've taken a small part. I should have been there. I blamed

myself for allowing you to ride home alone. I woke in the night thinking of it. I'm sorry, you don't know how sorry, but it was the only way I ever could see you."

"Wait, Billy. Last night he said more. He said I must give my word never to speak to you, never to recognize you again. He said that though I was a woman now, I had conducted myself like a spoiled child; and that any common soldier might make a jest — of me — with cause."

The hot blood rushed to the boy's face. He clenched his hand. "I should have been there," he repeated. "And you, Lucia?"

"I answered, since that was his opinion of me, my word could carry little weight, and I went up to my room and locked myself in. For hours I couldn't think. I started to pack a trunk, then I laughed, for how was I to get it anywhere? Oh, I was angry. When mother came knocking I couldn't answer her. She came again and again in the night, knocking, listening, speaking, knocking again until I was tired hearing her. At last I went to sleep, and when I wakened it was daybreak. The house was still and I stole out to the stables for El Capitan. But Walters, the one man I never can manage, was on guard. He had orders not to let my horse, or any other, go. Oh, I was desperate, then. I could only creep back to my room and take off my habit and steal out again and around to the side gate. It was reveille and I slipped through unnoticed. I hurried, but it's a long tramp from Steilacoom to Nisqually in the snow,

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"She dropped her hand and stepped aside, laughing softly."

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and, if I haven't been seen on the plain, my mother must have been at my door again. They will have broken it in, perhaps, by now. I remembered to lock it and bring the key." She laid her hand on her breast pocket and for an instant the amusement sparkled in her eyes. "You see, Billy," she added earnestly, "we must hurry. Every minute counts."

His foot was in the stirrup. He swung himself up. "Wait here," he said. "I'll bring Baldy as soon as I can change his pack to another horse."

"But," she said, laying her hand on his arm, "we can't go to Olympia, now. Don't you see father will ride this way directly? He would overtake us. We must go to Seattle, Billy. You understand? And the chaplain on board the Decatur" — She paused looking up into his face, her lovely mouth dimpling, her eyes dancing. "The chaplain on board, Billy —"

"You mean that, Sweetheart?" — and his voice was almost a whisper — "The chaplain on board shall marry us?"

She dropped her hand and stepped aside, laughing softly; and, at a word, Barnabee sprang, starting back to the waiting pack train.

XXIV

THE IRONY OF IT

THE Commandant put the house keys in his wife's hand, having tried them all ineffectually, and, setting his knee and shoulder against Lucia's door, slowly forced the lock.

The door gave on an untenanted and disordered room. Bureau and wardrobe open wide, were empty, but their contents littered the floor and trailed from a half filled trunk. Lingerie was heaped, unfolded, on the bed, and inside the threshold he stumbled on a crammed bag, apparently thrown back in afterthought. Clearly Lucia had gone in angry and unplanned haste. His quick eyes, sweeping the confusion, rested on a table by a window across the room. He went over and took from it a pencilled note. Anna followed and stood at his elbow reading with him the brief lines.

"I shall send later for my things. It is useless to follow me; I shall never come back."

That was all. No word of regret for her mother; no breath of excuse. The paper shook in his hands. For a moment he could not endure to see his wife's face. He turned his shoulder a little and looked off through the window, past the bare branches of the

oaks in the square. Somewhere out there, in the wintry solitudes, Lucia, Lucia, who had been tenderly sheltered all her life, loved, humored, given every benefit, was hurrying to escape from her home. And somewhere — this too flashed over him — farther still in that white wilderness, another girl was wearing her great heart out because a home had been denied her. The irony of it; the bitter irony!

He turned. His wife's eyes met his, deep, steady, with violet shadows under them; the eyes of a woman hurt beyond tears. "Anna," he said brokenly, "Anna — you — don't deserve it." And he sank into a chair, and laid his arms on the table, over the note, and dropped his face.

She did not speak, but put her hand on his head, smoothing his hair. Her fingers lingered at the temple, as though she could notice, dully, the coming gray.

His moment of weakness passed. He lifted his face. "She must have gone to Nisqually," he said with conviction. "Haworth is probably leaving the Post this morning. But Walters has orders not to give her a horse; I may be able to overtake her." He rose to his feet. "If I fail I may be delayed several days. They will go of course to Olympia; but the Governor's wife will refuse" — He broke off and the two vertical lines deepened between his brows. "You understand, Anna. In that case Haworth must marry her."

She bent her head. Her body rocked a little and

she locked her hands. "Anna" — His voice shook; he took her in his arms. "Anna, how you — must suffer. How could Lucia do this? How could she — with such a mother."

He released her and hurried to the door. As he went down stairs she drew nearer the window to watch him cross to the stables. She waited until he came out, riding the gray charger to the gates, then turned and moved uncertainly about the room, picking up a garment sometimes, but putting it down again, unable yet to think or act connectedly. Once she took Lucia's note from the table and went over it slowly, word by word, as though she found it difficult to decipher, and laid it down and resumed her walk, back and forth, like a helpless creature caged. At last, taking an uneven step, she tripped on a piece of clothing. She stooped and lifted it, and smoothing it carefully, folded and put it away. After that she began mechanically, but with a show of system, to separate and replace everything.

Finally she came upon an open locket dropped or thrown in a corner. It contained an old picture of herself taken the year after her marriage. She stopped to study it, seating herself in the chair by the table. When she took up her work again, her mind had grasped a suggestion. It traveled back to that spring morning when Lucia first lay a small, living bundle on her pillow. Then presently it was the hour of the daily bath. Her hands seemed to follow the lines of that dimpled, flawless shape; every soft curve. One tiny foot

rested briefly, a crumpled roseleaf in the hollow of her palm. How she had watched her grow. Now it was the day she commenced school. She followed her to the gate; she stood looking after her, stirred with emotion, a mother losing her baby, giving a little white soul to the world; and the child went gaily, without one backward glance, impatient of restraint, fearless, eager for unexplored kingdoms. The loneliness of that hour came over her now with fresh poignancy. Then, one by one, she recalled the small incidents that had so often marred the intercourse of every day; the selfish wayward traits in Lucia she had met and battled with, and failed to overcome. Why was it the child had lacked in affection, obligation, sense of duty? Once in her anxiety she had appealed to the Commandant and he had answered, "Lucia is exactly what I was — what I still should be if I hadn't known you." But she had not believed that; she had told him so. Oh, with such a father, so generous, so tender, so strong, how could Lucia have done this? How could she be so hard?

She began to analyze her attitude toward Lucia. "How was it," she asked herself, "how was it that I failed to gain a hold on her? Have I been narrow, blind, self-absorbed? Why have I fallen short?"

The room was in order. She went out and closed the door. Then, as she crossed the lower hall a step sounded on the veranda. Instantly she was at the door. Some one placed a message from the Command-

ant in her hand. She broke the seal, her fingers trembling, and unfolding the sheet, read:

"MY DEAR ANNA:— I was too late. They were southward three hours ago. A man was engaged here at Nisqually to go with the pack train, but Hawth, who left the Post with her horse, must have followed with her. I am just riding on, and hope to overtake them before they reach Olympia. The gray, remember, is a good grave

" LCO

XXV

THE LONG TRAIL

THE snow, even fall through the timber, was dry underneath and it had beneath it the accumulated forest litter of centuries, which while it still held the autumn rains like a dripping sponge, had felt the icy grip of the North. Higher up toward the mountain passes, this became a foundation of intricate masonry, supporting packed areas of great depth.

In the early winter twilight it became increasingly difficult to find the faint and unfamiliar bypath. Haworth turned more frequently, with growing anxiety, into the openings that might communicate with the great main trail. Lucia, riding Barnabee, crowded the leader and continued to storm.

"Oh," she cried, "that bough all but struck me, Billy; it drenched my neck. Was I not wet enough already? My feet are dripping; my skirt soaked through. Is it nothing to you that I am so cold? Why do you stalk on and on, William Haworth? Surely the stillness of these woods is terrible enough. Billy, why will you not speak to me?"

He pulled in Baldy and looked back. "You know I'm sorry. I've told you so, and that I shall always blame myself for bringing you this trail. We should

have gone to Olympia; it was much nearer and a better way. But it's too late to turn back now, and whenever I stop to explain we lose precious time. Come, we must strike the main trail soon, or at least the broad cross road from Snoqualmie Pass. I travelled this way once to Seattle, and there was a spring I remember and a wide space, where one could make a camp fire, this side of the junction. We will stop there, Lucia. There is a roasted grouse in my lunch box and I shall get you a fine little supper."

"Well, then, why are you waiting? Are we to spend all night in the forest? Why don't you ride on?"

"Hush." He held Baldy a breathless instant, turning his forest-bred ear to the down trail. There was a distant crash of boughs; a far bellow. He wheeled. "Back, Barnabee, back," he said. "Put him to that log; a little more rein. Steady, Barnabee, steady; now, now, over."

The thoroughbred swerved, gathered himself and cleared a great fallen cedar, lying parallel with the trail, and halted knee-deep in a bank of snow-covered fern. But Baldy could not follow. The crashing increased; the bellow boomed near. Haworth threw himself from the saddle, touching the log, and reached Barnabee's head. The next moment a small herd of terrified cattle charged by, and Baldy was off leading the stampede.

It all happened very quickly, and they were alone again in the great silence. They looked at each other. She drew a full breath, and seeing his discomfiture

laughed; her light, mocking laugh, but with a little break in it.

But Baldy was gone and with him the blanket roll, which contained the lunch-box and that promised supper. Presently she would remember that; and he brought Barnabee back into the trail, and walked on briskly before him, momentarily expecting another torrent of words. But it did not come, and in a little while, when they entered a wider place he dropped back to her side and looked into her face. She was crying. He could better bear her scolding.

"Why, Sweetheart," he said, "Sweetheart, see here. Please don't; I — can't stand it."

She brushed her hand across her eyes and looked at him, laughing again. "Why, I was crying. Yes, isn't it funny? I never do cry, you know. I hadn't believed I could."

And because she was so brave, with that added softness, doubly charming, and also because he saw ahead the long expected main trail, he took her in his arms and lifted her down.

She was stiff with cold and continued riding, and the strain on her muscles made her cry out. "Oh, Billy, Billy," and she clung to his shoulders, "I can't. I can't."

"You must, just a little, enough to stir your blood."

He helped her to an uprooted, chairlike trunk, the same which had served Father La Framboise one summer night, and having freed it of snow, threw off his cloak and spread it for her; and when she was

seated tucked the edges snugly in. "There, Sweet-heart, you are all right now; yes, you are. You will soon be rested and warm, and it's only a few miles further, and a good trail from this on to Seattle."

But he foraged for dead branches and started a fire. It was an easy matter with his good hunting knife, and he was glad that he carried it. And, since Baldy had stampeded with his rifle, and night had fallen in these unfamiliar woods, it was a satisfaction that he had worn his belt and pistols.

The flames leaped bravely on the gloom, and he cut fir boughs and fixed a little shelter from the east wind. He dried other branches and spread them for a carpet, and when Lucia had moved to this bower, and was made as comfortable as possible, he seated himself beside her.

He found in his pocket a piece of dried venison, such as woodsmen learn to keep about them, and cut thin slices from it, to dull the keen edge of their hunger. "It tastes better than it looks," he said.

But she pushed the hand that offered it away. The contrast of this meagre fare with that promised little supper was too great. "Oh, you stupid, stupid boy," she cried. "Why did I ever trust myself with you? It would have been better, much better to have made the trip with Baptiste, by canoe. I wish — I wish the Decatur had stayed in Steilacoom — harbor."

Her lip quivered and she finished with a quick rush of tears

"You are tired out," he said and put his arm around

her. "Come, rest. It will all be over, you will have forgotten everything to-morrow. Come, Sweetheart, I'll sing you to sleep."

He began softly, looking out into the fire,

"The sun shines bright on the old Kentucky home."

Presently he felt the pressure of her head on his shoulder. His voice sank to an undertone, timed to her regular breathing.

"Then weep no more my lady, weep no more to-day,
We will sing one song of the old Kentucky home,
The old Kentucky home so far away."

He sat for a long interval, motionless, supporting her weight, and looking absently, with a smile on his young lips, into the fire. The wind soughed a cello note through the fir boughs and piped a treble on bare branches. Sometimes a tree slipped its burden of snow, and the sound startled the solitudes.

It was Barnabee who roused him, tramping uneasily and shrilling a neigh. At the same time, beyond the fire, from the direction of the mountain trail, there came a foreign noise. The boy bent his head that way, listening. Then suddenly he lifted Lucia and laid her quickly behind him at the back of the shelter, and turning, took out his pistols, and dropped to his knee in the entrance, waiting.

XXVI

THE GATHERING HOSTS

FAR away on the heights of Issaquah towards Snoqualmie Pass, a slender column of smoke rose against the clear sky. Francesca, seeing it, brought Skookum from the thicket where he foraged. When a second steady signal paralleled the first she mounted and rode eastward. Everywhere, up unfrequented byways came Indians, propelling light canoes up narrowing waterways, stalking afoot, alone, by twos and threes, sometimes riding double, often followed by squaws and children, but always in silence, with unhurried purpose, and all bent in the same direction.

When these travellers reached the Snoqualmie trail, where it touched Lake Duwamish,¹ they went into night encampment. Across the water Issaquah gloomed darkly, and westward lay the white settlement of Seattle, hardly three miles distant.

At twilight some large canoes were pushed out from the beach and sparingly manned. They swung into the teeth of the wind and ran quartering into a running sea, for the lake stretched an almost unbroken sweep, northward twenty miles. Another fleet,

¹ Lake Washington.

hugging the opposite shore, scudded south under sail. They crossed the gloom like a company of phantoms and passed behind a long island. The first canoes turned finally, in the lee of a headland and followed this squadron.

Francesca set a small shelter of bark against a giant log and picketed Skookum beyond the barrier. His winter coat, long and shaggy, was sufficient protection, with the necessary exercise of foraging. He fell to work pluckily, striking the snow crust with his hoofs, and uncovering in the warm mold of the fallen fir, choice bits of pasturage.

Only the children slept. Francesca lay in her blankets, wakeful, watchful, waiting with the host. Through the cracks in her shelter she saw the near camp-fire and a breadth of the storming lake. The higher waves, breaking on the shore, shattered thin ice like glass. White crests, far out, lifted from the darkness into starshine, and, poising briefly, dropped into crowding gloom. Then, finally from the direction of the island, a blacker shape detached from the night and drew on into the light of the beacon. It was the first of the returning canoes. They came in one by one, following closely, swiftly, silently and laden to the rim. The camp filled with strange Indians; a taller, finer race, eagle-featured, commanding, but grown terrible in war-paint.

Francesca rose and went among the camp fires, greeting those she knew and asking for Kam-i-ah-kan. He had not yet arrived. The canoes, their number swelled by the second squadron, put out again

manned sparingly. The camp lost something of its caution. Landward other warriors came and many of these later parties were full handed. They brought slain bullocks, cows, the produce of the valley farms, which the squaws seized and add to the feast in preparation. The moon, now in her last quarter, rose, casting a pale light on the forest paths, and the new people pushed forth boldly to reconnoitre and forage.

One of these parties of Klickitats, returning a little before dawn, brought a fresh scalp. Instantly it was seized and set on a pole, and, borne in the midst of a select and shrieking company, formed the nucleus of a dance. The firelight suddenly touched the trophy so that Francesca saw it was fair; a man's hair, for it was short, or — was it a child's? A quick revulsion swept over her; unbearable disgust, horror, such as she had felt that summer day on the Yakima, and again in the autumn at Great Medicine. Her blood ran cold. The strain of white in her wakened and cried for the little helpless children, forgotten until now. She remembered a baby she had seen that morning in the doorway of a cabin she had passed in the valley; a tiny thing in its mother's arms. The woman had stood, her young face full of trouble, looking up the trail, but the baby had put out her hands to Francesca and laughed. Her eyes were like the first violets of the Yakima spring, and her hair was short, close-curling and — like that — the color of gold.

Francesca crept back to her shelter, closing her

eyes and covering her ears. And Billy — Billy — had hair like the child's; darker but soft, close-curling, shining. She had often watched the sun steal through the trees to touch it into red lights and gold. But why should she remember him to-night? Was he not a Boston like the rest? Besides, had not Leschi seen him at Nisqually, ready to start southward, into safety, with his pack train? It was the children — the little white children — she had to be sorry for. If only some one could let that one mother, with the sweet, laughing baby, know.

She was roused by a close, familiar, inquiring neigh. Skookum, behind the barrier, answered the call. She started to her elbow. There was a snapping of hazel and willow twigs, then, in the firelight, a glimpse of a shining chestnut coat. She got to her feet, and pressing incautiously against the end of her windbreak it fell. The horse sprang suspiciously, and the painted Indian on his back gave him a savage thrust with his foot. The spirited animal lunged, wheeled, and coming around stopped, quivering, before her.

Francesca laid her hand on his neck. Her face was colorless. The horse turned his muzzle, with a complaining nicker, seeking her arm. "Barnabee," she whispered, and caught a great sobbing breath, "Oh, Barnabee."

But the horse was without a saddle. Her thoughts ran swiftly. Doubtless the pack train had moved slowly on the winter trail, and, belated, Haworth had made camp. Barnabee had slipped his lariat, and wandering back to the neighborhood of Nisqually,

had been stampeded by stray Indians, and so come within range of the Klickitat.

She looked up. The Indian, who carried a burden across his knees, gave an exclamation of satisfaction. He lifted his load and swung it down on Francesca's blankets, then flung himself from the horse. She moved back watching him. Streaks of ochre, vermillion and black transformed his face, but through the mask flashed an expression of ferocious delight. Under her folded arms her heart sprang, and fell to beating like the wings of a trapped bird.

"The heart of Flying Hawk is glad," he said. "Long was it troubled. Like the many waters in the rainy season his heart was troubled. It cried for the Little Sister. But she did not answer. She was afraid. When he played the gambling blocks with Kam-i-ah-kan as she told him, and she saw how the black stallion and the two other horses and the many fine blankets were lost, her heart was small. Like the young pheasant at the coming of the hawk she was afraid. She took her horse Skookum; in the night she went; she rode fast through the mountains, back to the land of the Nisquallies."

So he had lost the game that summer evening on the banks of the Yakima. She had wondered about that.

"Long I, Flying Hawk, looked for her trail. A day I rode on the Cedar River trail, but the Little Sister had gone another way. At last I found it. Two suns I rode. The brown horse was swift. I came to the waters of Snoqualmie. Once I crossed, but the next

time I turned back. The people of Patcanim were at war with the Walla Walla. I, Flying Hawk, could not ride alone through their country."

"And you saw I was not worth the trouble," said Francesca. "Among the tepees of the Spokanes you found a better mate. This Tyee Leschi told me. The young squaw in Flying Hawk's tepee is not afraid. She is able to work."

The young chief smiled. "The Spokane squaw is good," he admitted. "She can work. But I will take also the Little Sister. When we have surprised the Boston village and burned the lodges, the Little Sister will go back with us to the Yakima. Then will I bring to Kam-i-ah-kan this fleet horse I have taken. Like the deer is he fleet; his skin is like the spring fawn's at the coming of winter. Also will I bring this young white squaw I have captured. Her hair is like the sunlight; the rings on her hands are priceless. And for these gifts the great Yakima will surely give to me the Little Sister."

Francesca thought again swiftly. It was impossible for her to return with Kam-i-ah-kan as she had planned, but it was necessary to humor the young chief. "Flying Hawk speaks well," she said quietly. "The young Walla Walla will be great among the tyees in council. I know the Boston horse. There is none like him. At the strong place of the Bostons by Nisqually, at the strong place by the Columbia there is no cayuse as fast; in all the feeding bands of Kam-i-ah-kan there is none like him. Flying Hawk did well to capture him from the herd."

The Walla Walla knew otherwise, but he wished to reserve his recital until after the battle, when the returning victors should vaunt their individual prowess and glories. She would hear him, then, with increased satisfaction and pride. Therefore he said only, "Flying Hawk did well."

Francesca looked down at the prostrate figure on her blankets. "The white girl is not strong like the young squaws of the Yakima; but I will make for her the soup of the Bostons and see that she is warm. She shall stay with me, and after the battle, she will be ready to go."

She bent to feel the girl's passive hand, and, for the first time, moving out of her own light, saw the prisoner's face. She started. Her fingers, on the white, jewelled hand trembled. Then she drew herself erect and turned with that military squaring of the shoulders, and again folded her arms. "Truly the young chief, Flying Hawk, has done well. He has taken the daughter of the White Wolf. The child of the Boston chief at Steilacoom, has he taken. For this will Kam-i-ah-kan's heart be warm."

The Walla lifted his head and threw out his chest in arrogance and pride. "But at sunrise I will seek the White Wolf himself. I, Flying Hawk, will take the scalp of the great Boston. To Kam-i-ah-kan I will bring it, that the great Yakima's heart may grow warm. Then truly will he give to me the Little Sister."

The Commandant, then, lived. How, then, had Flying Hawk been able to capture Lucia? Had she

wandered alone outside the garrison to be brought like Barnabee into the range of the Klickitat?

Presently she said, "The Boston horse is not trained like the cayuses of the soldiers; he may stampede in battle. And it is far by trail. If I take him around the lake Flying Hawk may cross quickly, in the Samammish canoes, after the battle. I will start soon, before sunrise, and wait on the farther side by Issaquah, with the squaws and old men who watch the Yakima horses."

There was a thoughtful pause. The Klickitat searched her face with eagle eyes, but she returned the look steadily, arms folded, head high. "The Boston girl is weak," she added. "She must go slowly. It is cold in the canoes; she might die. I will take her with me."

Finally he answered. "The Little Sister speaks well. In the tepee of Flying Hawk she shall sit like the white squaws who talk much and do nothing. Yes, the Little Sister sees far. She shall take the captured horse and the Boston squaw and wait for Flying Hawk by Issaquah."

He stalked away to join a group of banqueters, and Francesca, having blanketed the thoroughbred, and replaced the wall of the windbreak, hurried to the fire to prepare the broth. She asked a piece of beef of a Nisqually woman, and used a tin cup, which she placed over an improvised furnace of stones, filled with hot coals. While she watched the brew, the canoes returned again. This time they brought Kam-i-ah-kan and Leschi with his hunting party.

The camp grew restless, turbulent. Crowds applied fresh war paint. Even the Nisqually squaws seamed their cheeks with black, ochre and vermilion. The scalp dance revived. There was no opportunity to approach her uncle. She avoided him.

Lucia in the silent paralysis of terror watched from the little shelter. But, finding Flying Hawk had disappeared, when Francesca came with the broth, she found voice. She alternately stormed and appealed. She offered her rings. But her keeper, having loosened the thongs that bound her arms to allow her to eat, seated herself in the entrance and clasped her knees, turning her face to the lake.

Day at last was breaking. She moved to look at the captive. Lucia threw down her cup. "I see, I see, you are that girl who came to the garrison. You are Francesca. And now — oh, I can't expect it — you won't help me, You won't! You won't!" And she broke into a passion of distress.

Francesca rose. Her face was set, cold; a great unhappiness gloomed in her eyes. She bent over Lucia and bound her arms again. "If Flying Hawk ees hear you he meks some tro'ble," she said softly. "And if these Nisqually squaws come it ees pos'ble they are going hurt you." And instantly Lucia was passive in her hands.

Presently Francesca brought the horses. She had placed her own saddle on Barnabee and helped Lucia mount him; then, taking the end of his lariat, she swung upon Skookum and led the way southward along the lake. A bend shut out the encampment.

Eastward the sky warmed to pale yellow. Fire detached singly from the mass. A band of orange rimmed the horizon; the Cascades loomed against it black and grim. They changed to violet. A far summit flushed rose.

Francesca urged the horses. In a little while she picked up a bypath, the merest thread of way, and followed it westward, away from the lake. Once she stopped, and, pulling Barnabee close, freed Lucia's arms. "It ees best you doant speak," she said, and her voice fell to a whisper. "Leschi's Indians are everywhere, and they un'stand English fine. We must ride very fast; it ees best you keep your head down close by Barnabee's neck, under the trees."

After that she pressed Skookum faster and faster. Packed snow from his hoofs pelted the led animal. He remonstrated, tugging on the lariat, then crowded the spotted pony close. Powdered snow, shaken from the branches, filled the nostrils of both. Steam rose from their moist bellies and hung in low streaks where they had passed. Finally the undergrowth thinned and they came into the beaten Snoqualmie trail. A little farther an open broke before them; then, on the lower rim of this clearing, a sawmill and a blockhouse, flanking a cluster of cabins. Beyond them a broad reach of mountain-locked Sound, and on it a warship riding at anchor.

"The Decatur," cried Lucia. "The Decatur and Seattle."

Francesca stopped the horses and took the rope from Barnabee's neck. They started, and Lucia led

the way, free. There was no day sentry at the block-house, but a night watch was about to push out to the ship. The Lieutenant in the stern of the boat looked up and, seeing her, stopped the crew. He stepped back on the beach and, smiling, waved his cap.

Instantly Francesca was forgotten. Without one backward look Lucia raced down the slope to join the young officer.

A man stood looking from his cabin door. Some children on the hillside were trying a new sled. Francesca approached the pioneer. "Leesten," she said, and her voice took its deepest note. "The Klickitats have come by Snoqualmee. They must be here presentlee. Hurry. Tek the children to the ship."

The man stood dazed a moment, then ran to give the alarm.

She waited, watching him down the slope to the shore. The Lieutenant had taken Lucia from the saddle. He held her an instant, looking into her face, then, possibly in response to something she said, bent and kissed her mouth. A marine led Barnabee towards the small stockade. The young officer helped Lucia into the stern of the boat and took his place beside her. Another moment, and, hardly waiting for the settler to shout his news, the sailors pulled off.

The man ran on as far as the mill. Cabin doors opened and women and children began to troop down to several boats on the beach. Presently

launched, manned, and laden to the rim they trailed out after the Lieutenant's boat to the ship. Francesca turned and rode back up the trail. The Bostons had no room for her. She had forfeited her place with the Indians. But she was thinking of that little, laughing baby up the valley. She went that way.

XXVII

THE ATTACK

LUCIA had slept little; she had gone through terrible nerve strain. Her cap was lost, her hair wet, unbound, her shoulders chilled through; her skirts were drenched to the knees, her shoes soaked and broken by long contact with snow laden boughs. But the Lieutenant wrapped her in his cloak and she lifted her head from its folds, like some hardy, dauntless flower unhurt by the storm.

She had said, when the young officer lifted her from the horse, "Please, please don't blame me; I had to come." And this unexpected appeal, her forlornness, the subdued courage of her, touched a new note in the soldier, an unsuspected tenderness, while his pulses sang. But, now that she had finished the story of her adventures, he sat staring at the looming hulk of the Decatur, silent and grim.

The boat touched the ship's side. He rose to take the ladder rope and handed her up to the deck. She waited for him to follow, but he passed her without a word and joined the Commander forward. Of course, of course, he must report — at once. She started to go down to the saloon, then stopped and turned in uncertainty, looking off at the approaching

boats. The wind veering northwest, created a light choppy sea through which they labored clumsily. The ship tugged gently at her anchor chains. Lucia felt suddenly dizzy. There was a seat behind her, sheltered by the companionway, and she sank in it, wrapping herself weakly again in the Lieutenant's cloak. Presently he came back, but he passed her, unnoticed, and hurried below.

The first load came alongside. A child was crying. Its mother came up the ladder, and the small wailing bundle was handed up to her. Others followed and they all went trooping down to the saloon. The next boat arrived; the next. The first was going back. A sailor stopped near her watching it. Before he hurried away he sent a searching glance along the shore. No one spoke to Lucia. She was less important than the smallest block or sheet.

At last the Lieutenant came back up the companionway. "The saloon is filled with those poor babies and women," he said. "But here is the key to my room. Make yourself comfortable; use any of my things, and ring for the boy to take your clothes and dry them. He will bring you a breakfast; then, sleep — if you can."

He moved to the railing and stood alert, thoughtful, sweeping the shore with his keen eyes. She rose to her feet and followed his look. A great hush hung over the settlement and all the wood. It was as though every living thing held its breath. Then, suddenly, among the trees above the mill, something glittered; something long, slim, metallic, reflecting

the sun. Directly it was gone. In a sheltered place, where there was no wind, branches rocked. Finally a squat Nisqually shambled from this point, and, crossing a breadth of the clearing, entered a deserted cabin near the mill. Two others followed; then a trio of taller Indians stalked swiftly over. In a moment the building was full. Still no confusion. Still silence everywhere. But the forest seemed all at once to be watching with a thousand eyes.

"It's the ship," said the Lieutenant softly. "It's the ship baffles them."

"You mean they expected to find the Decatur on the beach, disabled?"

"Yes. They've been counting on surprising us there, and seizing the arsenal and commissary the first thing."

"But it is coming?"

"The attack? Surely. And I'll remember that one Klickitat, Miss Lucia. The thought of him will steady my arm."

"You mean —" Her voice caught; she moved nearer and laid her hand on his sleeve. Her face, in that moment, was like her mother's. "You mean you — are going into close action?"

"As close as I can. The men are hurrying through breakfast. I lead the first squad ashore." He paused, watching still that cabin near the mill; then, "What became of Haworth?" he asked.

She started. Her hand slipped from his arm. "I don't know. I — I hadn't thought." She moved back and, groping, found the seat and sank down.

"It was all so hurried, so dark. I was so frightened."

He turned and the look he gave her, straight from under his frowning black brows, probed her through. "You hadn't thought? The boy came that long, hard trip with you; he came believing the chaplain on board would marry you; you lured him to almost certain death — and yet — you hadn't thought."

She pressed her hands over her ears to shut out the denunciation in his low, ringing voice. She closed her eyes as though she hoped to shut out the judgment in his. "Oh," she cried miserably, "I wish — I wish I had made Baptiste bring me by canoe. I believed you would be glad to see me. You told me — once — you trusted me. But I see, I see." Her hands dropped; she rose again to her feet. "I made a mistake in coming — at all."

"It looks like the mistake has been mine. I'm a plain man, Miss Lucia, but I've knocked about the world a good deal; I ought to know men and women. How can I trust a girl who loves so lightly and often? Whose greatest diversion is in spoiling the peace of men? I want no wife who comes to me over the wrecks of other men. Haworth's body — if he is dead — will always lie between us."

He swung around and stood another moment looking off at the settlement. The marines were filing on deck. He joined them and presently they began to swing over the side into the lowered boats. She stood dully watching them pull away. It was as though his words were seared on her brain.

As his boat drew in to the beach, the bow of the ship wore slowly around shutting it from view. She went stumbling to the other side. The marines had landed. He led a squad towards the blockhouse. A little puff of smoke rose against the trees. One of the squad fell. The rest quickened their steps to a run. A gunner rushed by her. Some one seized her arm and told her to go below. The next moment, before she could reach the companionway, the howitzer spoke. The shell fell bursting through the roof of the cabin near the mill, and instantly the clearing filled with painted Klickitats. All the forest behind it was alive.

XXVIII

THE MARK OF THE KLICKITAT

THE Commandant had clearly before him the fresh impressions of the pack train, winding south-east over the crisp snow. His strong gray charger covered them with all the speed possible in the crowding winter woods, where often the weighted boughs dropped their canopy so close the rider must bend his face to the saddle-bow. How Lucia, so exacting of material comfort, must fret. He fancied her storming at Haworth, all petulance, imperiousness, charm; and the boy, against reason, casting about for an easier way. Surely they would turn back. He must meet them soon.

At the noon halt he overtook the packer, whom Haworth had secured at Nisqually; but the officer's pressing questions wrung reluctant reply. Mo'sieur had started that way, yes, with mademoiselle, but they had gone on in advance. They made much better time than the train. And yes, there were no tracks ahead, for sure. It was even possible they had turned into the branch the Commandant had passed an hour's ride from the Post. It was a cut that, avoiding the garrison, would bring one into the Seattle trail, yes, but as mo'sieur must have seen, it was a poor road.

The Commandant remembered the place clearly.

He had stopped to examine some hoof prints that turned off into it, but the way looked so narrow, for Lucia so impossible, he had concluded they were only the tracks of a refractory pack animal. He rode back and entered this bypath, but darkness fell so heavy that he was forced to halt at the first open, where he built a small camp-fire and blanketed his horse for the night.

But the officer found little rest. He lay for a time on his blanket, his head pillowed on hemlock boughs, his feet to the fire, but his wife's face drifted out of the gloom, white, still, with a terrible suspense, appeal in her eyes. He could not endure it. He rose and tramped the short open under the cold stars. How could Lucia have done this? With such a mother how could she? She had been wilful always, ready to disregard authority, unresponsive, but her imperiousness had seemed a safeguard. He had relied on her pride, and the habits molded in a conventional New England boarding school, to tide her through. He had not believed she could go so far. Oh, the selfishness, the cruelty of it — with such a mother — and where was she now?

He set his heels hard on yielding crust and clenched his hands. Then, presently, in sharp contrast to this wayward, hard, beautiful girl, there rose out of the shadows another face, young, noble, full of tenderness. He saw those small, brown hands — the hands he had refused — and through the great silence, soft, vibrating, dropping to contralto notes, came a voice, "I am Francesca."

And so the night passed. At daybreak he was in the saddle again and riding on through the cut, a darker shape on the brooding gloom. The trees crowded closer, branches hung lower, but he had clearly before him at last the uneasy track of the thoroughbred, covering sometimes the surer print of the pack horse. The sun rose and set a hundred flaming candles on the crystal boughs; the thicket on either hand became a vineyard where hung rich, wine-tinted fruits. A startled bat circled blindly around him; a small, brown furry creature pattered from a hollow trunk, and paused with sharp, upturned inquisitive muzzle to let him pass. But the Commandant saw none of these. He rode with his chin on his breast, a soldier, come from that grim court-martial of the night, dishonored, ashamed.

Suddenly the charger slackened his pace. He held himself cautiously, ears erect, snuffing the crisp air. The officer roused himself. The trail here was covered by the cloven prints of a moving herd. The cattle had come quickly and crashed off again into the underbrush, leaving a wake of splintered stems and bark. Then once more the track of the thoroughbred, but without the broader impressions of the second horse. He reached the place where the boy had picketed Barnabee, then, where the bypath met the main thoroughfare, the embers of the camp-fire, and beyond it, set against a granite boulder, the bower of green boughs. His eyes read these signs quickly and rested on a figure, a woman's, huddled on the ground before the shelter.

At his approach she looked up and got slowly to her feet. "I — I — am Francesca." She stopped, and like one stunned raised her hands to her head. "Baptiste," she went on, and her voice was hardly more than a whisper, "Baptiste ees mek mistake. Billee" — she caught a shuddering breath — "Billee ees not go the Natches trail. He — he —" Her limbs gave under her and she sank huddled again before the entrance of the bower.

So she had discovered the flight. And she loved the boy, she could love, like this. Her desolation, coming on those hours of his self-arraignment, probed to the quick. He swung out of the saddle. At the same moment there came booming on the solitudes the far report of the howitzer.

He caught his plunging troop horse and stood looking in the direction of the sound. A low bluff beyond the bower caught it and sent back an answering salute. "The Decatur," he exclaimed at last. "The Decatur at Seattle. But what is she bombarding?"

The girl lifted her face again, her whole frame trembling. "Kam-i-ah-kan," she whispered, "Kam-i-ah-kan ees bring his Klickitats over Snoqualmee."

"Kam-i-ah-kan?" The soldier started. His eyes met hers in sudden understanding. Then, "Where is Lucia?" broke from him.

"She — ees safe to the ship."

The fear lifted from his face. He put his foot in the stirrup, then paused and withdrew it. "Francesca," he said, "I am riding into danger. Here in

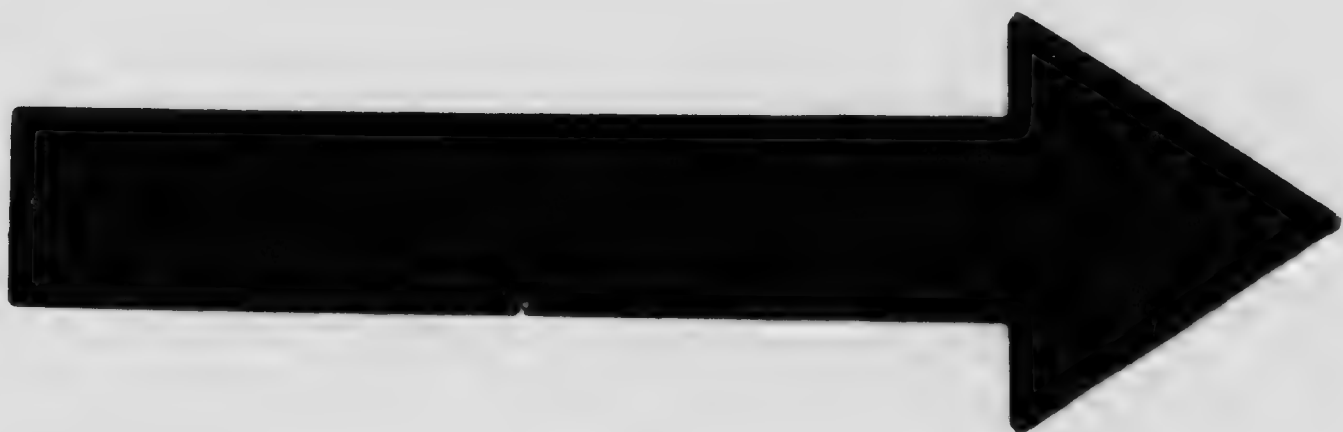
this secret place before I go, if it will comfort you, I can tell you the truth."

She rose to her feet again, and stood meeting his look. A dawning intelligence came over her face; but anguish, worse than heartbreak was in her eyes.

"I offered to provide for you, educate you, place you in a home; but now I want you to know, if I had only myself to think of, I would acknowledge you, gladly, before all the world. Francesca, you understand? Give me those hands. I am your father."

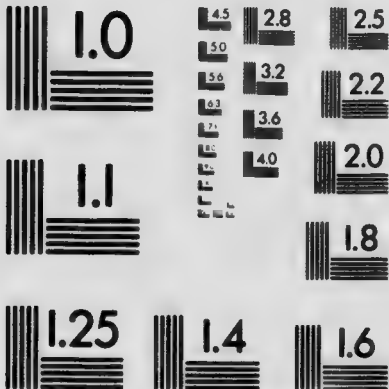
He moved nearer to take the hands; to gather her once in the protection of his arm; but the step brought his vision in range with the interior of that green bower. His arm dropped. His face went gray. He stood like a man hewn of granite, while the Decatur's guns boomed on the still air.

Inside that entrance and across it, like a brave man taken on guard, Haworth had fallen, and on his half nude body the Klickitat had left his mark.



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XXIX

A RESCUE

THE gray charger thundered swiftly up the beaten main trail, as though he knew each moment pressed and hoped to bring the troopers from the garrison in time. But suddenly he fell to a trot, head up, ears erect, while at the same instant a voice called, "Help. Clahowya, bo'jour, le rescue, hello dare."

The horse doubled a great trunk and stopped almost on Baptiste. Baptiste bound to a tree; his arms clasping the bole, his hands and feet secured by stout buckskin thongs, while near him, in like position, trembled the terrified Henry.

The officer dismounted and opened his knife to cut the bonds, while the relieved voyageur explained the situation volubly. "Oh, ya-as, it ees dose sacré Nisquallees ees do dis, for sure. You on'stan' dey lak me fine, an' dey ain' goin' keel some good Catholeek an' man Hudson Bay Companee, no merci. But dey ees be mooch 'fraid A'm goin' spoil de gran' surprise. I ees see dose Klickitats ees come by Snoqualmee. You can beli've it; I an' mon frien' Henray ees see dem when we go look mon beaver trap. Monjee, dare ees so beeg crowd I ain' able count dem, an' dey ees ride dose fine cayuse of prairie, an' ees wear mooch paint to de face. Oh, ya-as, I

have see dis, how dey ees look so strong an' terrible, an' how Leschi doan' go for hunt de elk lak he ees all tam say, but ees stop by Issaquah to mek some gran' feast for dem. An' hees Injuns ees tek plenty canoe so dey doan' have ride de long trail 'roun', but ees able leave dose horses an' come straight 'cross de beeg lac. But ya-as, dat ees why dose Nisquallees ees tek me dis lonesoom plas to tie me; I an' mon frien' Henray."

"Henry can keep straight on with the news to Nisqually." The Commandant was back in his saddle, and he held his horse in to add, "But Francesca is down near the Snoqualmie trail. She spoiled that surprise. She carried word to Seattle. Afterwards, there near the crossroads, she found young Haworth — murdered. She refused to leave him. Go, Baptiste, help her. Take her to the nearest safe place."

He galloped on and Henry followed, stiff from his night of bondage in the frosty air, but on feet winged with fear. Behind him pressed the painted Klickitat; before him was the Hudson Bay post and safety.

Baptiste pushed still more swiftly in the opposite direction. If Francesca had spoiled that surprise, she had betrayed the Yakimas and Nisquallies, and every moment she lingered there, near the junction of the two main trails, she risked enraged Indians coming upon her. But what had brought the young mo'sieur there? Had his train been attacked, in spite of Pierre's attendance, and had he rashly followed his stampeded horses so far, alone?

At intervals the booming of the Decatur's guns

reached him, and finally, between the reports he caught an increasing discord. It was the long drawn lament of the Nisqually squaws, their frenzied revilings, their cheers, spurring the warriors to fresh conflict. The shrouded trees shivered and stood in ghostly battalions as though they listened, appalled.

At last he came to the burned out camp-fire, and saw Francesca. She was dragging a fallen sapling from the thicket beyond the bower, and, at his approach gave him a "Bon jour," without stopping her work.

"Monjee, Francesca," he exclaimed, "you mus' come right 'way. Ya-as, ya-as, ma leetle gal mus' come quick to Nisqually. Come, Francesca, it ees bes' you doan' stay."

She threw the sapling in the path and began quickly to strike off the branches with a knife. "I am not able go yet," she said briefly, "but it ees best you doant wait, Baptiste."

He did not trouble her with further words, but threw off the light pack he carried, and drawing his own knife, began to cut another pole to match hers. It fell soon under his powerful strokes and he freed it speedily of limbs. Presently they laid these poles parallel and bridged the lower ends with boughs, wrapping and tying them securely with withes of willow. Then she brought Skookum, and the Canadian raised and held the fills while she made them fast with an improvised harness.

She led the pony then to the bower and waited, her hand on his neck, her face turned stonily up the trail, while Baptiste wrapped that silent figure in her

blanket and lifted it to the litter. She moved ahead, leading Skookum, while the voyageur picked up his pack and closed the rear, walking between the furrows the dragging poles made in the snow.

The crowding ranks of the trees seemed to open, waiting that moment while the little cavalcade filed through, and closed in behind it, battalion on battalion. The boom of the guns grew distant, and the fierce and continuous outcry softened to a broken dirge.

Early in the afternoon they reached the cabin which Francesca had remembered in the night. The door swung on its hinges, and while Skookum halted, gathering wind, she went to the threshold and looked in. The place was deserted. It had been looted. The woman and the laughing baby were gone.

She sank down on the doorstep, and, propping her elbows on her knees, dropped her face in her hands. Baptiste seated himself near her, waiting, listening, with his eyes turned always in the direction they had come. After a while he took bread and meat from his pocket and offered her a portion. "It ees bes' you eat some, Francesca," he urged gently, "for, if you ain' strong 'nough to go ver' fast, dose Injuns of Leschi ees goin' catch up, so soon de fight ees feenish an' dey start home."

She dropped her hands and looked at him, then grasping his meaning, took the food and rose, and picking up the bridle resumed the march. A little later the silence was broken by approaching cavalry, and they turned Skookum into the thicket while

the troopers with the Commandant at their head galloped past.

The wind freshened and shifted from west to southwest. It lost sharpness. The snow was no longer crisp. By sunset there was a steady chinook; the trees began a continuous drip and every track became a water filled impression. The jaded pony struggled on with growing difficulty and Baptiste took the lead breaking trail.

At last night closed in and the darkness forced a halt. The voyageur loosened the chafing fills to give Skookum respite, and, groping, found low hemlock boughs, under which, where the ground was bare, he spread his blanket. "But look," he said, "la bonne chance. Ma leetle gal ees goin' tek some rest, so when de moon ees rise she ees able go more quick. But it ees best I doan' mek some fire, Francesca. A'm sorry 'bout dat."

She followed his directions mutely, with the indifference of one past feeling or thinking, and Baptiste found a place apart, where he waited, listening, with his face turned in the direction they had come. But after a long interval she spoke. Her voice was soft, almost a whisper, but coming unexpectedly, out of the darkness, when she had been so silent, it brought him to his feet.

"Baptiste," she said, "you ees have no blanket. You ees cold."

"No," he answered. "No, it ees warm. When de chinook ees blow it ees nothin' to sit some leetle tam to wait for de moon; but when de night ees freeze,

an' A'm tie to one cedar tree, dat ees diffrent, for sure."

There was a brief pause, then, "Baptiste," she said, "there ees room for you. I 'most forget I have one good friend left. You — ees help me — gre't."

"Saprie it ees nothin', Francesca. Nothin' for sure. But," he added with great earnestness, "it ees le bon Dieu ees mek dose Nisquallees bring me to dat plas where Mo'sieur le Commandan' ees fin' me an' spik to me 'bout you. It ees le bon Dieu."

"The Nisquallies ees bring you?" she asked presently. "Baptiste, I lak to know 'bout that."

And so he settled on a corner of his blanket and told her, cautiously, his voice barely audible, sometimes pausing to listen with his face still turned the way they had come, how the Commandant had rescued him.

When, not long before dawn, the moon rose, her light came obscurely through gathering film. Thin cloud trailed across the dim stars, and when at last they had taken up the march, there sounded everywhere the rapid note of the rain.

Finally at one of the frequent halts she said, "Baptiste, I lak to see Père La Framboise." Then, as though down in the depths of her the thaw relaxed an icy grip, for the first time in many months, she fell to crying.

TO Lucia that day seemed endless. She returned from the top of the closed companionway, where she had crept to listen for any chance news of the deck, and threw herself down on the Lieutenant's berth, to stare, with unseeing eyes, at the engraving of a famous sea fight on the opposite wall. The ship's guns still boomed at regular intervals, and between the reports, above a sharp command or the rush of feet overhead, there rose a nerve-straining tumult from the shore. It was the war cry of Kam-i-ah-kan swelled by the cheers and imprecations of the Nisqually squaws, who hung on the edge of battle, tirelessly urging the warriors against the marines.

The Lieutenant's squad had gained the blockhouse in a swift, running fight. Later he had led a sally on that side of the settlement, but instantly the trees fringing the clearing bristled with arrows and knives and he had fallen back again to the stockade. He was there, somewhere still, perhaps in deadly peril, perhaps — She sat up on the edge of the berth and took her head between her hands. The sharp physical pain she suffered was almost unendurable and yet a relief. In acuter attacks it dulled thought.

So at last the remaining hour dragged to a close. At nightfall the guns ceased firing; the noise on shore subsided. She rose and went to the open port, turning her hot cheek to the air. It was no longer frosty and a puff, drawing around from the southwest, slapped her face like a damp hand. A tired child, outside in the crowded saloon, fell to sobbing, and the voice of its mother rose soft, soothing, in a hymn.

Suddenly she was conscious of feet approaching the Lieutenant's room. She ran to the door and threw it wide. He stood leaning on the arm of the surgeon. Through the grime of powder and dust his face was ashen, and his uniform, torn and soiled, was crossed by a red-stained sling.

"I'm afraid I must turn you out, Miss Lucia," he said weakly, and smiled, "but the Captain will find a place for you."

She stumbled to the berth and sank down, and the surgeon lighted the swinging lamp. She could not speak. She moved over the threshold, then turned back, waiting, not knowing why, but unable to go.

"Kam-i-ah-kan has fallen back on Lake Duwamish," the Lieutenant said slowly, "and your father — arrived just in time to press the retreat. A chinook is here and the Klickitats will probably push quickly on through the Pass, before the thaw reaches the mountains."

Still she said nothing, but stood watching him with a great fear rising through the question in her eyes. The surgeon untied the sling and began to cut away

the right sleeve. "Now, Miss Lucia," he said, "if you will help me, you can make it a little easier for him."

She held the injured arm, bathing it as she was directed, while the surgeon probed for the missile which was lodged above the elbow and against the bone. The new look of her mother deepened; it took little lines of self-suppression about her mouth. Every twist of the instrument hurt her, and when the last poignant thrust wrung from the patient a groan, she set her lips hard to stifle her own.

It was over. The Lieutenant rested exhausted. The surgeon washed the missile and held it on his open palm under the lamp. "Yes," he said curtly, "it's one of those infernal arrowheads. I'll trust you to make him comfortable, now, Miss Lucia. I've got to see to my wounded marines."

She sat looking at this thing the surgeon had dropped in her hand. It was made of agate, beautifully shaped, almost transparent at the edges. Its facets caught the light like a prism and it seemed to glow suddenly with venomous life. It was a curious, barbarous gem.

The Lieutenant stirred. She looked up. "Let me see it," he said. "I thought so; a bullet wouldn't have clung to the flesh like that. But take it, Miss Lucia, keep it. Sometime, when the discomfort of to-day is forgotten, you may value the trinket. I can imagine you telling about it. 'This is a souvenir of Seattle,' you will say. 'I was there on board the Decatur during a skirmish, and this Klickitat arrow-

head was taken from my friend the Lieutenant's arm. He was really quite brave.' "

She started to her feet. "Oh," she exclaimed, "how can you? How can you? "

"Then you couldn't give me that little credit? Well, it's all right, Miss Lucia, and thank you for helping the doctor. I shouldn't have allowed you to stay, but I knew you wouldn't mind it much, as most any of those other women would."

She turned again to the port and stood looking out into the night. After a while he asked, "What became of Francesca? "

"Francesca? " She laid her hand on the casing, gripping it hard.

"Yes, I got to thinking of her out there. I remembered she wasn't among the women on board, and a settler told me he thought she went back up the trail. But that would mean certain torture."

"Torture? " Her hand dropped. She turned slowly, and faced again his straight probing look, from under his frowning black brows.

"Yes. What else, Miss Lucia? She betrayed the Indians. They must have known it almost at once. And she rescued you. Even they counted you a prize."

There was a brief silence. She stood, leaning a little on the wall, her body trembling, but with her face turned again to the outer darkness. "My God," he said at last, "it was a tremendous mistake — my belief in you. There never lived a woman as faultlessly beautiful, and yet so — so all physical, animal — without a soul."

Finally she moved and looked at him. He was lying very still, with his hand covering his eyes. She went softly to the door, out through the saloon and up to the deck, finding a quiet place aft. She sat there for a long time, with her arm on the taff-rail, her face pillowed on it. A hush fell over the ship. The warm wet wind increased steadily, driving down the long sweep of the Sound. The Decatur began to rise and dip and tug at her anchor chains. Then the rain came, cutting the sea all around her with a swish, hiss, swish. It drenched her shoulders; her bare head.

Once she spoke. The words were hardly audible and yet they broke from her lips; they had in them the qualities of prayer. "Billy Haworth, I am punished. Listen, Billy, hear me, wherever you — are. I was all — that; all he called me — but — I am punished. I — am punished."

XXXI

"THE NEAREST SAFE PLACE"

BAPTISTE stopped on the threshold of the living-room. The Commandant's wife, worn out by long anxiety and waiting, slept in her chair. "Bo'jour," he cried softly, "bo'jour. Hello dare."

She was awake instantly, and on her feet, and hurried across the room to meet him.

"But you have not to be so 'fraid, madame," he said, and paused, embarrassed, smiling, kneading his fur cap between his hands. "Mo'sieur le Commandan' he ees all right, an' ees tek his soldiers to scare dose Klickitats so dey doan' ever come back by Snoqualmee some more. I have spik to a man who ees ride quick by de long trail. He was be dare to de gran' battelle an' ees see it ees feenish, for sure. An' he ees tole me dose beeg guns to de ship ees keel so mooch as t'ree, four hondred Injuns, merci, ya-as, before de garrison men ees arrive. An' it ees Francesca who ees spoil de gran' surprise. De Commandan' ees spik 'bout dat, ya-as, when he ees come back for hees companee?"

"No, Baptiste" — the lady smiled a little, shaking her head — "the Commandant said nothing about Francesca. He only told me that the Indians were making an attack on Seattle, and that Miss Lucia was safe on board the Decatur; then he was away to

the stables and riding off with his men. But tell me about Francesca. She spoiled the surprise? "

" But ya-as, madame, dat ees true. I doan' ever beli've she's goin' back to Kam-i-ah-kan, lak she ees tole me, to be Yakima squaw; she's too mooch white, for sure. An' when dose Klickitats ees come over Snoqualmee, an' she ees ride to lac of Duwamish to see dem arrive, an' dey ees paint de face so terrible, an' dance one scalp dance, ma leetle gal ees think 'bout all dose small white children an' ees be onhappy. So, presen'lee, when Flying Hawk ees come riding de yo'ng mo'sieur's horse, an' ees carry de ma'amselle to give her for one gran' present to Kam-i-ah-kan, Francesca ees fool him fine, an' ees bring Barnabee an' de yo'ng ma'amselle quick troo de woods to Seattle, before dose Injuns ees arrive."

The lady caught a great breath, and steadied herself on the back of her chair. " Francesca rescued her? She risked herself like that? And warned the settlement? "

" Monjee, madame, ya-as. Ma leetle gal ees have de brave heart. You can' on'stan' 'bout dat, for sure. But dose people by Seattle ees so mooch scare', an' so beeg hurry to tek way dose women and small children to de ship dey doan' think 'bout her. How she ees have no plas to go. Dey forget Leschi an' Kam-i-ah-kan ees goin' be sacré mad for she ees spoil de gran' surprise, an' dat Flying Hawk ees lak to find her some more."

" But Baptiste, you found her; you helped her away — in time? "

"Presen'lee, madame, presen'lee, so soon Mo'sieur le Commandan' ees come ontie me from dat yo'ng cedar tree. Ya-as, madame, de Nisquallees ees do dat, for sure. You on'stan' dey ees lak me fine, an' ain' goin' keel some good Catholeek an' man of Hudson Bay Companee, but dey ees 'fraid A'm goin' spik 'bout dose Klickitats ees come by Snoqualmee; I have see dem when I go to mon traps; I an' mon frien' Henray."

"I see, I see," Anna smiled again faintly. "The Indians tied you by the trail and the Commandant rescued you?"

"But ya-as, madame, he ees cut dose strap of buckskin an' A'm free. I an' mon frien' Henray. An' Mo'sieur le Commandan' ees tell me 'bout Francesca ees spoil de gran' surprise, an' ees 'lone by de long trail; an' how de yo'ng mo'sieur ees be keel. You doan' know 'bout dat, madame? But ya-as, monjee, it ees true. An' Francesca ees find heem an' ees stay to bring heem 'way. De Commandant can' mek her leave heem, an' he ees say, 'Go, Baptiste, help her. Tek her to de neares' safe plas.'"

"And you found her?"

"But ya-as, madame, close where de Snoqualmee trail crosses de Nisquallee. De noise of dat gran' battelle ees soun' terrible, you can beli've it; but she doan' care 'bout dat; she ees too busy to mek ready some strong pole of alder to hold de nice bed of hemlock. An' when it ees feenish we harness Skookum, an' madame, it ees good t'ing I'm dare to help her — an' lif' mo-sieur."

The Canadian's voice broke a little. He was no longer embarrassed, but he put his hand to his throat, easing the loose handkerchief as though he were choking.

"Madame," he said, after a moment, "I can' stan' it to see her. She ees look so tired, so onhappy. I can' stan' to see so gre't tro'ble to her face, ma leetle gal who ees be so smart an' fine, who ees mek to be love', an' ees use all tam to laugh so pleasan'lee."

"I understand, Baptiste," she answered gently, "I understand. Poor child. Poor — waif." Her lip trembled. Tears, long near the surface, brimmed her eyes and fell.

"Madame, you ees feel sorry for her. Ees it because she ees have no plas to go? No home? You on'stan' it ees not pos'ble dat she goes with Kam-ah-kan now. She ain' able go to Leschi's camp some more. Dose Injuns dat live by de mission an' ees be good Catholeek ees lose some tillicums by Seattle; she mus' not go to dem. An' Père La Framboise ain' come home. Mon cabane ees far by de wet trail an' she doan lak to go to Mère Marie, for sure. Madame, it ees right de Bostons help her. She ees save some women an' small children by Seattle. She ees save de ma'amselle. She ees save de gran' Commandan' heemself. Madame, it ees not pos'ble dey all forget her."

The lady shook her head. She could not speak. A sob held her throat.

"Madame," Baptiste went on brokenly, "you ees cry for her. Ees it not pos'ble dat you spik to

mo'sieur? Dat you ees say to him you — yourself — ees able help Francesca?"

"Yes, yes, Baptiste, of course. Her place, her home, after this, is with us. I'm not ungrateful. I will do all I can for her. The rest of my life I will show how much — I owe — to her."

"So, madame, so." Baptiste paused, a soft light shining in his eyes. "It ees as I beli've. You ees have de kind heart. But, madame, Mo'sieur le Commandan' ees think diffrent. He ees all tam 'fraid you doan' lak her. An' he ees lak her gre't. But ya'as, it ees true. She ees tole me 'bout how he ees say to her, 'lone by de trail, 'Here in dis secret plas, if it will comfort you, I can tell you de truth.' An' he ees say, 'Francesca, you on'stan'. Give me dose han's. I am your father.'"

And so at last the truth was forced upon her. She did not cry out; deny it. But her body rocked slowly; she stood locking and unlocking her slender fingers, her breath coming hard and quick, and looked straight into the voyageur's honest, pleading face. Presently she turned and walked, uncertainly, the length of the room. Again she saw Francesca coming up the steps with outstretched hands. Her mind caught up with sudden clearness all the detail of that day. In a flash she recalled incident on incident. She remembered how, afterwards the Commandant had locked himself in his office, alone for hours; and in the end had ordered his horse to ride out into the darkness and silence of the plains. How he had risen tired, spent, from many sleepless nights, to listen with

forced calmness, while she pressed him to find that officer, his friend, who was Francesca's father. "Oh," she told herself, "I have been blind. Blind."

Baptiste stepped to the door waiting. He held his cap reverently, as though he had come into the mission chapel, and his eyes sought the floor. Finally she turned and came slowly back.

"Baptiste," she said gently, "go, please, and tell her I want her. Tell her to — come home."

"Madame," he answered, and raised his eyes, still reverently, to her face, "de Commandan' ees say, 'Tek her to neares' safe plas.' Dat ees here."

He turned and led the way through the hall to the outer door and flung it wide. Francesca rested on the lower step of the veranda, her arm on a higher one, and her face dropped upon it. Beyond her Skookum struck the slush with his forefoot, seeking forage. The alder fills had chafed his sides; standing they still dragged, supporting that silent, blanketed figure on its bed of hemlock. The little horse raised his muzzle and rubbed it, in brief discouragement, on the hitching-post. It was there, one early summer afternoon, Barnabee had waited, pulling impatiently at the ring, while his master loitered in the balcony.

The Commandant's wife went down the steps. "My dear," she began, but the sob again caught her throat. Francesca looked up. She got slowly to her feet. "My dear," — the lady put her arm about her, — "come in — out — of the cold."

XXXII

THE GREATER QUESTION

IT was the way of this woman, having come to a decision, to give herself to it completely. A fire was burning in Lucia's room, where everything had been prepared for her possible return; and it was there, in Lucia's white bed, after the warm bath kept in readiness for her, Francesca was put without delay.

A little later, coming from her own room with a frock of soft brown cashmere she had gone to bring, Anna found the exhausted girl in a deep sleep. She hung the gown over the back of a chair, where she had already placed a suit of Lucia's warm underwear, and stood looking down at the unconscious face. She had not known before how truly handsome the child was. The cheek bones were a little high, but the features were almost classic. And now that the handkerchief was gone from her head, she saw the strongest trace of the Commandant was in the fine breadth of brow. She had, too, his hair. Anna had noticed when she brushed it that it possessed the same vital quality, taking every shade from silk to velvet. Her mouth was beautiful. Oh, the shame of it; the shame of it! That this child, in whom was mingled so much of him, should have lived an outcast, miserably, barbarously among Indians.

Presently she turned and went over to the fireplace. She picked up the drying skirt, the colored handkerchief, the small, wet, worn through moccasins, and dropped them on the blazing backlog. The action held significance. It was as though in that interval, while the flames crept over, retreated, fastened again on these things, she watched the funeral pyre of Francesca's past.

Finally she went out and closing the door softly, moved on down the stairs to the silence of the big living room. The problem of Francesca was solved, but she had yet to meet the greater question.

It was as though dual selves in her were pitted against each other. The traditions of her race, so strong in her, her sense of duty, example, the high moral code she had fixed for women of the frontier; her purity, fineness, all rose in swift denunciation of this one man she had loved, whom for more than half her life she had believed in, counted above reproach. There was but one course; immediate separation, ultimate divorce. Then, recovering, the other side pressed. It showed her that young officer, daring, impetuous, on the banks of the Yakima. Had he not said Lucia was exactly what he had been at her age? The motherhood so deep in her, spoke there. And older men of the party had incited the catastrophe they should have averted; yes, the man Allison had been most to blame. Next, it was the time before their wedding-day, when he had come resolved to make a confession. Oh, she saw it clearly now; how he had tried repeatedly to lead to it, and

she as steadily had turned him aside. She had been impossible. Always she had been impossible. She had set herself on a pedestal, high, self-righteous, unapproachable; and she had raised him to another, to make a god of him. Oh, how he must have suffered — this intensely human man — how she had made him suffer.

She began to walk the floor, locking and unlocking her slender hands; stumbling sometimes. The misery of it all; the long drawn cruelty. There was that day Father La Framboise had told them about Francesca, when possibly he first learned of the child. How relentlessly she had spoken. Always that had been her attitude. And finally that last day, before Francesca came, when he had made one effort more. It was so clear now, but it had been the old story; she had refused to understand. And so, for her sake, to spare her, he had denied the child. She knew, she knew what that had cost him. He who hated a lie; he to whom cowardice was a crime. Lucia, Haworth would not have counted. She knew that. He had crushed down all the truth, all the nobility in him — just to spare her.

Still — still — their lives could not go on — the same. She must go at once, the first opportunity. It was unsafe of course to go by trail and canoe down the Cowlitz, as she and Lucia had come in the early spring, but the Beaver would sail soon for the lower Columbia, and she would take passage in her. Francesca should go with her, and Lucia. They would be ready to start then, for the Panama or

around the Cape on the first ship. She could leave a letter if Malcolm failed to return to the barracks in time.

But she would like to see him once more. It would be hard for him, following so swiftly on his trouble with Lucia. How could he endure this big silent house? He who had always been so fond of his home. And so the fight went on, often brokenly but through a second day, another night and well into the next morning. Then Lucia's letter came.

It was a little incoherent in places, and took a second reading. Even then, after a thoughtful interval, Anna turned to the beginning and read again:

"DEAR MOTHER:—A trapper passing up to Nisqually has promised to take a letter to the factory for you. I am coming home if you want me, but the trail is impossible, and I must stay with the Decatur until she cruises in that direction. I am able to help the surgeon with the wounded marines, and particularly the Lieutenant, who is very, very ill. This morning an operation was necessary and he has lost his right arm. I am so wretched, mother. I think when I was a little girl, a baby even, I never needed you as much as I do now. All the rest of my life I will be careful of you. Please understand Billy was not to blame; I made him come that awful trail and I would give anything to know he is safe now. If he is at the Post send him word Barnabee is here unhurt, and the Captain thinks we can take him

aboard when we sail for Steilacoom harbor. And, mother, if you see Francesca do all you can for her. She saved me from the Klickitat. You don't know what that means, but he surprised us while we were resting on the way, and captured me. I don't know how it happened, I was sleeping, and it was very dark, but Billy must have fought; I heard his pistols. It was over almost instantly, and the Klickitat carried me away with him, on Barnabee. I was horribly afraid; I, who never in all my life have been afraid of anything. I woke in the night dreaming of him, and prayed Francesca might not meet him. She risked herself for me and I forgot her. Tell father; tell him to find her. And, mother, tell him I am punished.

"The messenger is waiting.

"LUCIA."

It was a little after this, with the letter still in her hands, that Anna came to her final decision.

XXXIII

THE EMPTY SLEEVE

POSSIBLY, so the surgeon admitted, the arrow-head had been touched with poison; but an ugly, pronged thing like that alone might have induced the complications which had led to the amputation of the Lieutenant's arm. He had passed through critical hours, fought the Klickitats over and over in the heat of delirium; but at last, one mild day, when the Decatur weighed anchor, and sailing out of the harbor, rounded the point towards Steilacoom, a hammock was swung for him on the after deck, and he was brought up to enjoy the air.

"Now, sir, I wash my hands of you; I can't do anything more." The doctor paused, watching Lucia arrange the young officer's pillows and fold another blanket over him. "In fact you owe all that's left of you to this nursing; nothing else pulled you through."

The chaplain laughed softly, rubbing his plump hands. "That's what he has been saying, three times daily, all over the ship."

"But I'll wager," added the surgeon dryly, as they walked away, "I'll wager a bottle of the factor's port, your services begin where mine leave off."

The chaplain laughed again shaking his head.

"There isn't a finer pair in the navy. But it's strange, isn't it. — how that skirmish brought out the woman in her. Why, we all put her down for a cold-hearted, but charming little coquette; nothing more."

"She had the stuff of the Commandant in her. I saw that when I picked her out of a whole shipful of women to help me take that infernal arrowhead. But, you are right, down out of sight there was a little of her mother, and the Lieutenant's danger brought it out."

The young officer himself was saying, "Perhaps I'm ungrateful, Miss Lucia, but I can't help feeling sorry you tried. Think of it. Everything over, one's career spoiled, at thirty-two. Half a lifetime left to drift aimlessly through. And nothing to show for it but a small Indian skirmish suppressed, out here on the edge of nowhere. It makes me coward enough to wish that the Klickitat had stayed to finish his work."

"Oh, how can you feel so? How can you?" Her lip trembled. She turned and took a seat by the taffrail, and looked off at the turquoise sea. His eyes, big and fathomless in his thin white face, hurt her; she could not endure his empty sleeve. "You call it a skirmish," she went on, controlling her voice; "but think what it would have meant to the Puget Sound country, to the whole Northwest, if the Decatur hadn't been afloat in Seattle harbor when the Klickitats came; if you hadn't been there with your handful of brave marines. Why, a victory then, to the Indians, would have changed the history of the Pa-

cific coast. In the general rising that surely must have followed, every settlement would have been wiped out — except the Hudson Bay post at Nisqually, and before other immigrants could have ventured in, Canada might have seized the opportunity to take permanent hold. Don't call it a skirmish. I was in the night time living over that hideous day. And I know — I know it means advancement to you; honorable retirement at least. I — I am proud of you."

There was a brief silence. She looked still farther away, lifting her gaze higher and watching the peaks and shoulders of the Olympic Mountains breaking through rolling cloud. He saw only, against the background of blue sea, the faultless contour of her face. Then he said, "Thank you for saying that; I don't deserve it." And, after another pause, "I'm just a blunt soldier, Miss Lucia. I don't always put things in the best way, but I want to ask your pardon for the part I had in making that day hideous for you. I want to take back all I said about — young Haworth. You couldn't have known his danger. He, himself, no one, knew the Klickitats had crossed the mountains. And you risked with him what came. After all he may be safe and back at Nisqually, now."

She caught a great breath and rose, standing unsteadily, leaning a little towards him. "I would give anything, anything, to know that. I could give my own life, I think, to have Billy Haworth back — safe."

"I am sure you could," he answered quietly, but a shadow crossed his face.

She sank down again in her seat, looking off to the mountains; her hand on the taffrail closed in a tightening grip.

After a while he said, "We shall be at Steilacoom soon, Miss Lucia, and in a few days I sail in the *Beaver* for the *Columbia* to take the first ship home to New England. I — may never see you — again. But before I go I would like to know this: If Haworth had reached the Decatur with you that morning, would the chaplain have — done as the boy wished?"

"Perhaps." The unusual flush crept over her face; she turned it farther away. "I was rash and I understood, then, so little about the meaning — of things. But I hadn't thought of it until that last moment — at the start. You see I was so desperately in a hurry, so anxious, so — foolish."

"Then I must have paid those silver fox peltries in any case. We must find a way to reach the Post and select them in a day or two, Miss Lucia, before I go."

"In a day or two," she answered softly, "so much can happen. My mother, in a day or two, will have made a new man of you."

Suddenly he broke out. "That's the worst of it; the rest doesn't count. I'm disabled, useless for a time, it's true; but I could pull myself together, find some sort of grip, somewhere, if — I hadn't lost you."

She turned her face to him, but her eyelids

drooped, and that quiver, the surface stir of shaken depths, that sometimes had disturbed the Commandant's face, swept hers. "Lucia, Lucia," he cried, "I can't ask you to marry me, now; but you don't know — how much — I think of you."

She rose again and moving a step stood looking down at him. "He — has a tender mouth; you can manage him easily — with one hand." She paused to steady her voice. A kind of brightness, not mirth, shone in her eyes; then her lips dimpled a little, and she added, with the faint color rippling again to her ears, "Yes, I mean that. I've lost those silver fox peltries. I want you to take — El Capitan."

XXXIV

THE FACE OF DEFEAT

FLYING HAWK stepped from the small canoe in which he had travelled with Tyee Leschi, down the slough from Issaquah and across the big lake. The fugitive Nisqually pushed on towards the portage, making his way covertly back to the salt water and his people, but the young Walla Walla remained to creep stealthily through a fringe of undergrowth in the direction of a fire, which, kindled in an open, rose against the gathering darkness, and marked the night encampment of the White Wolf.

Returning from pressing the Klickitat retreat, the Commandant had joined the Governor in establishing a cordon of blockhouses between the Pass and the settlements. These small log forts were already completed and manned with volunteers, and the troopers, moving homeward, rested within a day's march of the garrison.

Flying Hawk, raging at Francesca and the loss of his booty, had turned in the face of defeat, to lurk on the skirts of the company. He knew the White Wolf, who stood high, with breadth of front, like a great leader among the pack. Many suns he watched him, and the longer he waited, the stronger was his determination to take this one mighty scalp before

he followed the retreating hosts to the plains of the Yakima. He stalked the officer continuously, ready for the ripe moment.

But the Commandant, long accustomed to Indian warfare, was never off guard. He understood a score of subtle signs: the rustle of foliage, the slight bending of a limb, where there was no wind; the faint clicking of bare twigs. Once it was the singing of a bowstring, and, instantly spurring his horse aside, he saw the feathered shaft sink, quivering, in the bole of a hemlock.

But the man with the bow never allowed himself to be seen and Leschi, who one day joined him, knew better than to sound an alarm with his rifle and bring the whole detachment at their heels. He constantly restrained the young chief, but finally Flying Hawk lost patience and the desire to kill overshadowed his greater purpose. It was nightfall and a solitary soldier, dipping a bucket at a spring, offered opportunity. Again it was daybreak and a guard, stooping to warm his rain-chilled shoulders at a small fire, was stricken with another noiseless barb. Then a trooper sick and travel-worn, failed to close in directly with the moving command, and was found later, stretched on the trail, with still one more of those thin-edged points of agate in his breast, and his scalp lock taken.

That final night many scalps had accumulated at Flying Hawk's belt, but the lock of the White Wolf was not among them. Another sun and it would be too late; the soldiers would have reached their strong

house. For this reason the Walla Walla hunted close, crouching, creeping like a panther in the thicket.

The Commandant stood by the camp-fire. He took off his hat, shaking the rain from the brim, and the flames shone on the coveted prize. He passed his hand through it swiftly so that it bristled, while, like the mighty leader of the pack, he watched the movements of his men. Flying Hawk strung his bow; the aim was certain. Then suddenly he remembered he could not hope to secure that trophy with the soldiers so near. He lowered his arm.

At the same moment Baptiste swung out of the shadows of the trail into the firelight. He stopped directly in front of the screened watcher, making of himself a shield for the Commandant, while he delivered a packet. Flying Hawk moved back another step, into the meshes of a cedar, and waited.

"Oh, ya-as," said Baptiste, in answer to the officer's inquiry, "de madame ees well, for sure. An' she ees lak Francesca fine. Monjee, doan' you know 'bout she ees dare to de garrison? But ya-as, mo'sieur, it ees you dat ees say 'Tek her de neares' safe plas.' An' ma leetle gal ees able help tek care de yo'ng Lieutenant who ees hurt to de gran' battelle. Doan' you hear 'bout dat? No? But it ees true. He ees get some poison arrowhead to his arm. Monjee, but it ees terrible. You can beli've it. It ees not pos'ble to save it, an' Mo'sieur le Doctor mus' cut it off, sacré ya-as, close by de shoulder. An' so, when de ship ees come by Steilacoom, dey ees bring him 'shore to de garrison to grow some strong. An' de

madame, she ees tek care on him, an' de yo'ng ma'amselle; an' Francesca, too, she ees able help fine. But de madame ees tole you all 'bout dat, for sure, in dis letter she ees send for you."

The Commandant, who had already opened the packet, singled out Anna's letter and thrust the rest into his pocket. It was the first time he had heard from her directly since he left the barracks with his company. He had moved so constantly she could hardly have known where to send a messenger, and he wondered what urgent matter had led her now to despatch Baptiste. Francesca was there at the garrison. What might not have passed between them in the close intercourse of so many days? The paper shook in his hands. Then, while Baptiste turned away to a group of soldiers, the officer bent to the firelight to decipher the unfolded sheet.

"DEAR MALCOLM:— If it is possible please hurry home. Lucia has promised to marry the Lieutenant and start with him on the Beaver for the Columbia, to take passage in a ship about to sail for New England. Possibly you have not heard he was wounded at Seattle and has been dangerously ill. He lost his right arm. Lucia was able to aid the surgeon on board, and he paid a tribute to her nursing. You will find her greatly changed; so softened, thoughtful, womanly. It is easy to see the Lieutenant is the right one, and, since she must marry, so young, I think we can trust her to him.

During these days, which he has spent with us, convalescing, I have found an unexpected fineness in him. But she will always blame herself about poor William Haworth, and, when she learned of his death, refused to be married so soon. Only her anxiety over the Lieutenant, and his need of her on the long voyage, prevailed in the end."

The Commandant paused, thinking over this news. So it was the Lieutenant. Why, then, had Lucia — But, well, perhaps the Lieutenant would be able to fathom her. And, yes, he, too, was glad the Lieutenant was the one. His glance fell again to the page.

"Francesca, who has been with me since the day you went away, is going East with them to enter school. Lucia feels she cannot do too much for her. Indeed, we both, all our lives, shall never forget how much we owe to her. I shall do my best to make her feel 'the nearest safe place' is home."

That was all; no upbraiding, no denunciation, yet between that last statement and her signature the Commandant looked into an abyss. Of course, of course she had not guessed the truth even now. But the thing was impossible. Impossible. How could he see Francesca in the house — like that? How could he endure to see Anna heap upon her all those hundred little kindnesses of every day? How could he go on, holding himself in check, on the brink

of this eternal precipice, and make no sign? And any moment she might understand. To-day, before he returned, Francesca had only to repeat their last interview and it would be clear enough. He began to walk mechanically, stumbling a little, away from the fire, up the trail. How could Anna bear it? When the time came how could she bear it, without him to help her through.

Presently he was dully conscious that some shape was moving with him, but under cover of the thicket. Then, suddenly, more from force of habit than a desire of self-preservation, he stopped short and stepped backward. It was not far enough and Flying Hawk's arrow pierced the open letter and pinned it to his side. The next instant the Walla Walla hurled himself on the officer.

His incautious, exultant battle cry interrupted Baptiste's story. "John, Waltare," he cried. "Avaunt. Avaunt. A rescue. Mo'sieur le Commandan', he ees attack'."

Even while he spoke the voyageur led that rescue, and, running, he saw the officer pull himself erect and set his back to a tree, at the same time lifting his own knife to parry the fierce onslaught. It all happened very swiftly, and in another moment the Canadian closed on the Indian from behind, catching his arms in a powerful grip above the elbows. The weapon dropped from Flying Hawk's hand. He twisted, writhed, but Walters followed Baptiste a close second, and presently the young chief was thrown, bound, on the wet earth in the illumined circle of the fire, to

waste the night in impotent fury, dumb, degraded, under the surveillance of the scoffing patrol.

The surgeon drew the broken arrow, which, striking one of the officer's ribs, glanced off, making only an ugly surface hurt, that was quickly cauterized. But the night was miserable. Through the open front of his tent the Commandant watched the sentries change, telling off the hours. Once he heard the Walla Walla tugging at his bonds, and, moving a little, saw him quivering in the firelight; his chest heaving with great furnace breaths. In that instant, meeting the Commandant's look, all the primal passions of the world seemed to blaze in his eyes. He had only tightened his knots, while the flow from a knife thrust the White Wolf had given him, started afresh. A soldier, who roughly replaced the loosened bandage, laughed aloud. After that silence stretched on interminable. Then, at last, lifting his eyes, the officer noticed a break in the cloud wrack, and through the rift glimmered a pale star. The rain was over and along the eastern sky line came the dawn of a clear day.

A little later he was in the saddle once more, beginning the last march. But the prisoner who followed in the train, bound hand and foot to a stout troop horse, was less oblivious of the trail. The Commandant's alertness had dropped from him. Sometimes his shoulders lost their military carriage; his big frame sagged forward; his chin sank to his breast; he moved like a mechanical instrument impelled by an unseen force. The surgeon and Walters

watched him with growing concern. But finally as they drew near the garrison, at the close of the day, he pulled himself erect like a man come to a final resolve. He rode towards the gates with his head high, his fine eyes fixed straight before him, not like a leader returning from service well done, but like a strong man who sees and goes to meet — inevitable defeat.

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XXXV

THE DIFFERENCE

THE day, after the heavy rain, was faultless, and the trail, striking the gravelly edge of Nisqually plains, rang firm under the big mule's hoofs. Père La Framboise looked about him with keen enjoyment, inhaling deeply the balsam laden air he so long had missed. Presently a squirrel paused to reconnoitre from the trunk of a tree and scurried in front of the rider; a second followed in a belated leap, and still another, the family scold, stopped on the end of a log to hurl a volley of invective while the curé passed. Then, somewhere, a meadow lark poured out one deep, full-throated strain. And it was only February. He had forgotten how early spring came in this favored place. It was good to be back again; it was good to be back.

His eyes, travelling the vast spaces, lingered along the far ramparts of the Cascade Mountains and rested on the crown of Rainier, rising like a temple above the bastioned wall. It was even grander than he had remembered. Not Mt. Blanc, that he had lately seen, had greater majesty and splendor. And these parks, too, — his look returned, — were finer than he had believed. There was nothing like them

in the old country; nothing in all the world. This clump of trees he was approaching, with branches lapping one above the other, symmetrically from the ground, one taller top lifting like a spire, suggested a cathedral. A fragment of the Gloria in Excelsis rose to his lips and boomed softly on the still atmosphere, as he entered the green nave. Then, suddenly, his voice was hushed; he drew his rein. The mule was stubborn and he pulled again, looking back. He had passed a grave.

The mound was new and so nearly concealed by the boughs of a hemlock he might easily have missed it, but for a band of color that had caught his eye. Now he saw this was the design on one of two beautifully wrought Yakima baskets, which were placed at the head and foot, and filled with ferns, a first dogwood flower, and a few early clusters of the pinkish-white bells of the salal. Bending a little he was also able to decipher, on the temporary board that marked the grave, the letters W. H.

Baptiste had told him everything. It was miserable. Miserable. He had been fond of the boy; almost he had made a Romanist of him.

When the curé rode on a silence had settled over the plain like a cloud. There was only one who could have placed those baskets there. His great heart ached for her. But clearly, clearly she, this daughter of many sorrows, was set apart of God. Clearly she was one appointed to aid him in the glorious new work.

Finally, as he drew near the garrison, the stillness

was broken by a long and piercing neigh. Two riders were coming from the gate, but the call rang apparently from the square inside the stockade. One of the riders, who wore the uniform of an American officer, the curé had not seen before, but his companion was the daughter of the Commandant.

The horse in the stockade neighed again and the officer looked at the girl beside him. "I can't bear it," she said. "I can't bear it." Then, turning her face, her cloudy eyes met the priest's, and recovering herself, she smiled a little and drew her rein. "How do you do, Father La Framboise," she said, "I'm glad to see you back. This is the Lieutenant, who led the marines at Seattle. You have heard of course?"

The curé bowed profoundly. "I am honored. So. It ees Monsieur le Lieutenant has save the settlements of massacre; who has not heard of that?"

The young officer shook his head in modesty. "I helped a little, perhaps. But, from all I have heard, if you had been here, Father La Framboise, there wouldn't have been any trouble."

"Oh, what made you go away?" cried Lucia. "What made you? Think, if you had been here to manage the Indians, what a difference it would have made" — her voice broke; she looked at the Lieutenant's empty sleeve — "to most of us."

Then the curé grew modest. "You meestake, mademoiselle; you meestake. It ees pos'ble I have a ne small influence of those poor Nisquallees, and of the Coeur D'Alenes, but not of the Yakimas, yet,

mademoiselle; not of the Yakimas, yet. They leesten only to their chief Kam-i-ah-kan."

The Lieutenant's horse started and the neigh rang out once more from the barracks. Lucia's lip quivered; her whole face. "It's Barnabee, Father La Framboise. You know, too, about — that? We are keeping — his — horse until Colonel Haworth arrives. One of the men has had him out several hours to exercise, but he is calling El Capitan. He is so used — to going with him."

El Capitan wheeled. It was growing difficult for the Lieutenant to hold him in. "Good-by, father," she said, gathering her self-control again. "Francesca is at home. We could hardly keep her from going straight to the mission when she heard you were back."

The curé waited, watching them ride on together up the plain, in the direction of the trading post. The young officer speaking earnestly, leaned a little to look in her face, but her hand was on his bridle, subduing the horse.

As he rode through the gate the priest discovered the Commandant's wife in the square. She had stopped for a moment to speak to the restless thoroughbred. A man, coming from the stables, untied the halter and led him away, and she waited to greet the curé.

"But, father," she said presently, when he had dismounted to walk on with her to the quarters, "I hope your mission was successful enough to pay for all your absence has cost us."

"Madame," he answered, this time waving the tribute, "I have the success beyond my wildest dream. — Ees it not so you call it? — Not in Montreal, not in Quebec, but across the Atlantic, in the old world, I have secure money abundant to build the fine convent in whatever plas I, myself, select. And but now six sisters of Notre Dame are coming around that Cape of Horn, to the Columbia Rivière, and so up the Cowlitz by the first brigade. Yes, yes, they will be here before I am able to have all of a readiness. But, madame," — he paused, looking thoughtfully into her face — "I am tro'ble to find that one Sister Superior of my dream. You must understand, madame, she should have that experience of this frontier, and yet be of an education, a presence, a what you call self-command, to fill the position of lady abbess, in a co'ntree that ees to be greater than even la belle France."

Anna smiled. "It sounds fabulous. Not that I underestimate your ability, father, but consider the material. I have seen your roses blossom in this wilderness, as large, as fragrant, as perfect as those I remembered in France, but it will be a different task to reclaim these dregs of Nisquallies. How can you ever hope to make a thrifty people of them?"

"Madame, it ees not alone the Nisquallees. But leesten. Here, at once, on this frontier of America, there ees opportunity to convert to the most holy faith more than one hundred thousand souls." He paused again, watching her face narrowly. "If you, sometam, have acquaintance of such a lady, madame,

even though she has not come yet to the first vow, I ask you to do me the pleasure to let me know."

They had reached the veranda steps. Anna turned and met his look steadily. The fine lines of self-suppression deepened a little at the corners of her mouth; a momentary mist clouded her eyes. "Such a woman," added the curé slowly, "may see gret' sorrow; then, madame, in so gre't work it ees pos'ble she forgets."

"That is true, father; but I do not know of such a woman now. If the time comes you may be sure I will let you know." And she went on up the steps.

At the same moment Francesca threw open the door. "Bon jour, mon père, bon jour," she exclaimed and started to meet him; then, before he could finish the steps and take her hand, she drew back against the wall, and added in the French he had taught her, "There is confession to make. When you have heard you may not give absolution. Mon père, mon père, I tore the letter. I threw it in the Nisqually so that I could not read it. I gave my rosary to a heretic squaw."

She paused with a deep intake of breath, shrinking closer against the wall. The color burned in her cheeks and went, leaving them pale. The long black lashes drooped over her eyes. The curé stood in silence watching her. It was not that the strange gown of brown cashmere, the edge of fine lace at her throat, this new way of wearing her burnished braids of hair wound around her shapely head, surprised him; but that something, springing from the great

fatherhood down in the depths of the man, suddenly gripped his voice. He had not known until that moment how much he thought of her.

"Mon père, why did you go away?" Her voice, vibrating, took its deepest contralto tones. She lifted her eyes. Her breast rose in quick labored breaths. "If you had stayed, mon père, nothing — would have happened."

"My child," he said at last, "my child, come, tell me all about it." And he took her hand and led her up the veranda to the rustic seat.

Anna went in and closed the door.

It was an hour later that the troopers filed through the gate. Most of them rode directly to the stables, but several turned the other way, passing the officers' quarters around to the guard room. They were bringing the prisoner.

As he approached the veranda Francesca rose from the bench and stood staring down at him. He lifted his glance and instantly all the latent fury, pent through those wearing hours of captivity, blazed in his eyes. "Halfbreed," he exclaimed, and his voice thickened in immeasurable contempt, aversion, execration. "Halfbreed," he repeated as his horse carried him by.

Francesca turned, shaken by the insult, and looked at the curé. "That is Flying Hawk," she said. "They — have taken him."

The priest rose and moved a step looking thoughtfully after the young chief. Presently his glance came back to her. "So," he said slowly. "So, it is as you

believe; the Indians know what you have done. Even this Walla Walla blames you, now, for everything. My daughter, it is better that you go away for a time, as madame planned. When the convent is finished and the Indians grow quiet, when their heathen souls begin to see the light, I will let you know. A little of the world, a year or two in the ladies' school, will make you more fitted for the work."

As he said this the Commandant stopped at the foot of the steps. Walters held the gray charger while the surgeon helped him out of the saddle and supported him up to the door. There he said, "Thank you, doctor, I am all right now. Yes, I assure you. But come over by and by and satisfy yourself, if you must, about this scratch."

The surgeon remonstrated. "You've got to be put to bed. You should have been there all day."

The Commandant, laughing, promised to go at once, but, as the surgeon moved reluctantly down the steps, he turned and came up the veranda. He did not speak to Francesca, but stood a moment looking down into her lifted face, then he put his arm around her, and bent and kissed her forehead. After that he raised his head high and looked at the priest. "I am glad to see you back, Father La Framboise; no one else seems able to make these Nisquallies listen to reason. But, I am doubly glad of this opportunity to thank you for all your long kindness to — my daughter."

The curé was almost surprised out of his usual

courtly diplomacy; but hastened to say, "Monsieur, it was my pleasure to teach the child; she was of so great intelligence. She alone in this diocese of Nisqually was able to converse in correct French with me."

"Later," continued the officer, "I shall make some material acknowledgment of your service and my gratitude; if not directly to you, why then through your missions. But, now, father, I beg to be excused. I have been making forced marches the last two weeks, and have a little work for the surgeon. Francesca will be back directly, to finish the visit with you, and remember, before you go I want to send you a stirrup cup of the factor's port."

The curé noticed that he walked unsteadily, and once he put his hand to his side; but he kept the other arm still about Francesca, drawing her with him towards the door. She did not say anything but lifted her eyes to his face, watching him in a sort of suspense that was half a shy wonder.

When they had gone in Father La Framboise seated himself again on the bench. He believed a tragedy was about to take place behind that closed door. "But afterwards," he told himself presently, "afterwards madame will remember my words. She will come to me. She will be ready to take the first vow."

The door to the living-room was open, and, as the Commandant came to the threshold, he saw his wife seated by her work table with her embroidery in her lap. When he stopped, having placed her needle carefully, she looked up. Instantly she started from

her chair. Her scissors clattered to the floor. She laid her work down and stood, steadying herself a little with her hand on the edge of the table.

"Anna," — his voice was almost austere; he met her look with slightly frowning brows. "Anna, the time has come; it can't be put off any longer. You must understand I — am this child's father."

There was a brief pause, then he bent and kissed Francesca again on the forehead and released her. She waited, hesitating, looking from him to Anna. When her glance returned he nodded, and she went quietly back to the curé.

"There is nothing else to be said," he added. "The rest has been told often and thoroughly."

Anna was silent. All that she had prepared to say was unnecessary now; but a fine eloquence seemed to tremble on her lips; a something not quite tenderness, not motherhood, glowed softly in the shadowy gray depths of her eyes.

"I know — fully, Anna, what it means — to you." His voice broke there. He had grown suddenly very pale. He went a few steps and sank down on a couch, leaning weakly on the pillows. "Of course" he added, "you will go East — with Lucia and the Lieutenant."

"Malcolm," she cried suddenly, and all that she had thought unnecessary to say thrilled in her voice, "you have been wounded."

"Slightly; a prick in the side that has been aggravated by the long day in the saddle. You will see, at once, about your berth on the Beaver? "

She shook her head, walking towards him. "Not if you want me to stay, Malcolm."

"Want you?" He straightened himself and looked up into her face. "Want you? What I — want doesn't count."

She took the place beside him on the couch. "I have known — the truth — a long time," she began and stopped to gather her self-command. "Ever since Baptiste brought Francesca home. I tried to write to you about it at the time I sent the letter by him, but I couldn't put it in the right way. It seemed better to wait until you came back. And now you — have saved me the trouble." She paused again, smiling a little, then went on gravely, with the emotion she tried to cover creeping into her voice. "Looking back I don't see how I could have been so blind, Malcolm, unless it was because I so completely, worshipped you. When I think of it, how I must have made you — suffer — I wonder how you can ever — forgive me."

She leaned forward trying to look in his face, but he turned it to the pillows. "Forgive — you?" he whispered. "Forgive — you? Oh, my God."

"At first," she went on after a moment, "I thought I must go away. It seemed the only thing to do. But, in the end, I saw a woman has the right to solve her problem for herself. You see, Malcolm" — she paused once more, and after an old habit she had of holding his attention, laid her hand on his sleeve, pulling it with a gentle insistence, until the Commandant lifted his face and looked at her, "before

— all those years," — and a soft color like the bloom of an apricot touched her cheek — "I was judging other women; now I have decided for myself. It makes a difference."

THE END.

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